

THE IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASED FEMALE REPRESENTATION ON  
IOWA SCHOOL BOARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKING

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Graduate School of Education and Human Services  
Drake University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Thomas A. Andersen  
May 1988

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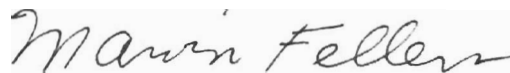
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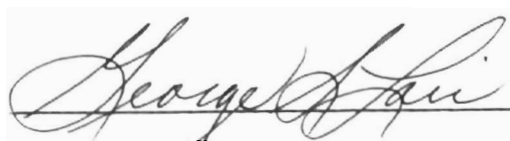
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# THE IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASED FEMALE REPRESENTATION ON IOWA SCHOOL BOARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKING

An abstract of a Dissertation by

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The Problem. The purpose of the study was to compare the backgrounds, motivation for candidacy, governance styles and priorities of male and female school board members, and from this comparison determine the implications of increased female membership for educational policy making.

Procedures. A questionnaire was designed to secure information on the backgrounds, motivation for candidacy, governance styles and priorities of randomly selected Iowa school board members. Comparisons of data were reported by percentages and chi-square analysis was applied by gender on each sub-variable studied.

Findings. There were significant differences in the backgrounds, motivation for candidacy, governance styles and priorities of male and female school board members. Background differences were in the areas of employment status, occupation, parental status, marital status and district size. Females were motivated by more specific education-related concerns, while males were motivated by general community concerns. Their candidacies were supported by very different kinds of groups. Females took a more active approach to policy making and brought strength to the areas of curriculum, communications with constituents, student concerns and policy development. Males took a more passive approach to policy making and brought strength to the areas of finance, plant management, transportation and management skills.

Conclusion. Male and female school board members bring unique strengths and weaknesses to school boards which complement one another. School boards are more apt to carry out their policy-making responsibilities more effectively and more comprehensively when both females and males are represented.

Recommendations. School districts should more actively seek out and encourage female school board candidates. In districts where the board is primarily male or female, superintendents should take safeguards to insure that boards give adequate attention to all areas of policy making from finance to curriculum. Efforts should be made to provide human relations training for superintendents and board members to help them better understand gender similarities

and differences and promote cross-gender understanding and cooperation. There is a need for greater emphasis in the preparation of superintendents related to policy writing and management, instructional and curriculum leadership, public relations, administrator-board relations and school board meeting management. These are areas where female board members demand greater accountability.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables .....	vi
Chapter	
1. Introduction .....	1
Rationale for the Study .....	1
The Purpose of the Study .....	3
The Significance of the Study .....	3
Definitions .....	4
Related Literature .....	4
Instrumentation .....	5
Hypotheses Tested .....	5
Limitations of the Study .....	6
Delimitations .....	7
Assumptions .....	7
Summary .....	7
2. Review of Related Literature .....	9
Introduction .....	9
The History of Local School Boards .....	10
Functions and Roles of School Boards .....	15
The Qualities of An Effective School Board Member .....	19
Major Causes of School Board Dysfunction .....	22

Chapter	Page
The Social Composition of School Boards .....	27
Motivation for School Board Involvement .....	43
Mode of Governance .....	48
Priorities of Board Members .....	53
Summary of the Literature .....	62
3. Methodology .....	67
Population and Sampling Procedures .....	67
The Instrument .....	68
Analysis of Data .....	70
4. Presentation of Data .....	72
Background and Experience .....	73
Motivation for Seeking School Board Membership .....	86
Governance Styles .....	91
Priorities of School Board Members .....	110
General Comments .....	129
5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	135
Background and Experiences of School Board Members .....	136
Motivation for Seeking School Board Membership .....	140
Governance Styles .....	144
Priorities of Male and Female Board Members .....	150
General Comments .....	154
Conclusions .....	156
Recommendations .....	157

Chapter	Page
Recommendations for Future Study .....	162
Bibliography .....	164
Appendices	
A. Questionnaire .....	169
B. Letters of Transmittal .....	178
C. Female Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Strengths .....	182
D. Male Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Strengths .....	188
E. Female Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Weaknesses .....	193
F. Male Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Weaknesses .....	198
G. General Comments of Female Board Members .....	202
H. General Comments of Male Board Members .....	214

## TABLES

Table	Page
1. Age of School Board Members by Sex .....	73
2. Education Level of Board Members by Sex .....	74
3. Marital Status of School Board Members by Sex and Size of District .....	75
4. Family Income of Board Members by Sex .....	76
5. Employment Status of Board Members by Sex .....	77
6. Vocations of Board Members by Sex .....	79
7. Parental Status and Number of Children in Different Levels of Education of School Board Members by Sex .....	81
8. District Enrollment by Sex of Board Members ....	82
9. Board Tenure by Sex of Board Members .....	82
10. Political Affiliation by Sex of Board Members .....	83
11. Organization Membership Before School Board Candidacy by Sex of School Board Members ....	85
12. Leadership Experience in Organizations by Sex of School Board Members .....	85
13. Motivation for Seeking School Board Membership by Sex of Board Members .....	86
14. Groups Who Encouraged Board Candidacy by Sex of Board Members .....	88
15. Official Endorsement of Candidacy by Sex of Board Members .....	90
16. Majority Rule Versus Own Judgment Governance Styles by Sex of Board Members .....	92

Table	Page
17. Legislative Body Versus Corporate Board Theory by Sex of School Board Members .....	93
18. Years as Board President by Sex of Board Members .....	94
19. Years as Vice President by Sex of Board Members .....	95
20. Groups that Influence Decision Making by Sex of Board Members .....	97
21. Meetings, Discussions and Phone Calls per Month by Sex of School Board Members .....	100
22. Visitations of Attendance per Month by Sex of Board Members .....	102
23. Hours per Month Spent Reading, Studying and Preparing by Sex of Board Members .....	104
24. Sources of Information by Sex of School Board Members .....	105
25. Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Strengths by Sex of Board Members .....	108
26. Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Weakness by Sex of Board Members .....	111
27. Areas of Responsibility Board Members Wanted to Work on by Sex of Board Members .....	113
28. Areas of Responsibility Actually Worked on by Sex of Board Members .....	114
29. Committee Membership by Sex of Board Members .....	119
30. Board Members' Involvement in School Board Operations by Sex of Board Members .....	121
31. Involvement with Support Services by Sex of Board Members .....	122
32. Involvement with Educational Program by Sex of Board Members .....	124



Table	Page
33. Involvement with Communications and Public Relations by Sex of Board Members .....	126
34. Involvement with Budget and Finance Issues by Sex of Board Members .....	127
35. Involvement with Personnel Issues by Sex of Board Members .....	128
36. Involvement with Pupil Services by Sex of Board Members .....	129
37. General Comments by Female Board Members .....	130
38. General Comments of Male Board Members .....	131

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Rationale for the Study

Approximately 2,500 residents of Iowa voluntarily give up a great deal of their spare time to serve on their local boards of education. Their decisions not only have direct consequences for the education of our youth and our level of taxation, but they also have numerous indirect effects, ranging from local property values to the civil rights of individuals. Yet the membership and activities of school boards remain among the most unexamined aspects of local government.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1927 and 1975, the percentage of women on Iowa school boards stood virtually unchanged at 7 percent. By March, 1987, according to research done by the Iowa Association of School Boards, approximately 21 percent of Iowa school board members were women.<sup>2</sup> But Iowa and midwestern school districts in general have consistently reported a lower percentage of female involvement than the

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<sup>1</sup>John Crowley and Marilyn Johnson, Women and Men on School Boards: A Summary Report to Participants in a Study of 37 New Jersey School Boards (ERIC, ED 187 022, 1978), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Velie, telephone interview, 25 March 1987.

national average. Nationwide, the percentage of women on school boards remained at approximately 12 percent from 1927 through 1973. Between 1973 and 1984, female representation increased from approximately 12 percent to 36 percent.<sup>1</sup> According to the above figures, the rate of participation of women on school boards has tripled, both nationally and in Iowa, in the past ten years. There are signs to indicate that this trend will continue over the next decade.

This increase in female participation on school boards represents a new source of talent and energy in the governance of education and gives rise to a number of questions. What are the implications of this dramatic change for public schooling? Is there a gender gap between male and female school board members? If so, in what policy areas is it reflected? Do the different experiences of men and women in life, and in schools, result in divergent thinking about educational priorities or in differences in governance styles? Is the relationship between school administrators and board members affected by the sex of the board member? Although studies in several other states have investigated one or more of the above issues, no comprehensive statewide study involving both male and female

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<sup>1</sup>"Board Survey: Who You Are, Region by Region," American School Board Journal 173, no. 1 (January 1987): 24.

school board members has been done, nor has any such study been done in the state of Iowa.

#### The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is fourfold. The first purpose is to examine the background of male and female school board members in Iowa to determine if there are any significant differences which may have implications for their governance styles, their priorities on contemporary educational issues or their motivation for seeking board membership. The second purpose is to determine if there is a significant difference in the reasons why males and females become candidates for school board membership (motivation for candidacy). The third purpose of the study is to collect data related to governance styles to determine if in fact there are significant differences in the way male and female school board members carry out their responsibilities. The fourth purpose of the study is to determine if women on Iowa school boards establish the same educational priorities as their male counterparts.

#### The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be useful to school administrators as they work with boards with increasing female representation. They will be beneficial to school board members who are striving to build genuine, productive and amiable working relationships with their peers. They

will be useful to community groups who may be concerned about the relationship between educational policies and board makeup. In addition, the findings of this study will provide some insights into present as well as future trends in educational policy making.

### Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will apply:

1. School Board. The legally designated, policy-making body charged with carrying out the function of education in a school district.
2. School Board Member. An individual who has been elected by residents of a school district or appointed by duly-elected officials of a school district to determine the educational policies of the school district.

### Related Literature

The primary concern of this dissertation is to do a comparative study of male and female school board members and from this comparison determine the implications of increasing numbers of women on school boards for educational policy making. Included in the review of related literature are sources related to the history and development of school boards, the responsibilities of school boards, the social composition of school boards, as well as sex-based studies on motivation for board candidacy, governance styles and

educational priorities.

In some cases the literature is directly related to this dissertation, having the same topic and same type of population. In other instances the literature is indirectly related, examining the same topic, but a different population, or a similar population in a different region.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used to gather descriptive data about male and female school board members in Iowa and their perspectives on educational issues was adapted by the researcher from a questionnaire used in a related study of school board members in Dupage County, Illinois, by Stephanie Marshall entitled "The Profiles, Function, and Roles of School Board Members in Dupage County, Illinois." The procedures for adapting and field testing of this instrument are described in Chapter 3 under instrumentation.

### Hypotheses Tested

The following null hypotheses are presented as a basis for testing the outcomes of this study:

1. There is no difference in the background and experiences of male and female school board members in Iowa.
2. There is no difference in the factors which motivate male and female school board members in Iowa to seek board membership.
3. There is no difference in governance styles of male and female school board members in Iowa.

4. There is no difference in the priorities male and female school board members place on contemporary educational issues in Iowa.

### Limitations of the Study

By its very nature this study has certain limitations that need to be identified. The study uses the questionnaire technique for gathering data. The weaknesses of this technique have been pointed out by several researchers and stem primarily from the self-selecting nature of the respondents.<sup>1</sup> Every effort was made in the construction and administration of the questionnaire to reduce this disadvantage. The study is designed to measure responses at only one point in time; thus findings may not generalize over time.

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<sup>1</sup>B. Van Dalen Deabold, Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), 324-29. Van Dalen lists the following weaknesses of the questionnaire: (1) "Some subjects may not supply accurate answers." (2) "Respondents who are not free, willing, or qualified to divulge information may ignore certain questions or falsify their answers." (3) "Many people do not give thoughtful consideration to questionnaires; they fill out the forms carelessly or report what they assume took place." (4) "Not uncommonly respondents tailor replies to conform with their biases, to protect their self-interests, to place themselves in a favorable light, to please the research, or to conform to socially accepted patterns." "To obtain reliable data," Van Dalen concludes, "the questionnaire must be carefully structured," 329.

### Delimitations

This study is limited to board members of public school districts in Iowa serving grades kindergarten through twelve. There is no attempt on the part of the researcher to generalize findings to private schools or higher education institutions in the state or to similar populations in other states.

### Assumptions

This study makes three basic assumptions. First it assumes that the subjects' responses relate to their governance style. Secondly, it assumes that their perspective on educational issues are genuine and uninfluenced by media bias. Thirdly, it assumes that the subjects' stated positions are reflected in their votes as school board members.

### Summary

One of the foundations of a democratic society is the desirability for governing bodies to be as representative as possible of the populations they serve. If this is accepted then the trend toward more female involvement on school boards is a positive one. However, there have been few studies done to determine if any real change in policy making occurs because of this trend. This study compares the background and experiences of male and female school board members, their motivations for board candidacy,



information related to their governance style, and their priorities while on the school board in order to determine the implications of this trend, if any, for educational policy making.

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes a general introduction of the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of recent literature related to the topic of gender factors in policy making in education. Chapter 3 presents the design of the study as well as the methods used to collect and analyze the data collected. Chapter 4 includes a summary and analysis of the data collected during the study. The final chapter summarizes the investigation and presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further related investigation.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Related Literature

#### Introduction

During the 1984 presidential election, the term "Gender Gap" became a household word. The media focused attention on the question of whether men and women, given their unique life roles and experiences, view contemporary political issues differently. The recent rapid increase in the involvement of women on school boards poses a parallel question: Do men and women, given their unique life roles and experiences, including educational experiences, have differing viewpoints on major contemporary issues in education? It is only in the past decade that specific related literature began to appear.

In order to develop an historical and sociological research framework for this study, this chapter is divided into six sections. These include the function and roles of school boards and school board members, the social composition of school boards, backgrounds of school board members, motivation for school board involvement, mode of governance and priorities of school board members.

### The History of Local School Boards

The United States Constitution is conspicuous in its omission of references to education.<sup>1</sup> The tenth amendment of the constitution states that "Powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."<sup>2</sup> The individual states, therefore clearly have the responsibility and authority to oversee the common education of the children who reside within their respective boundaries.

The authority of the states to govern education is embodied in state constitutions and exercised through state legislatures.<sup>3</sup> Article IX of the Constitution of the state of Iowa clearly gives the state total authority and responsibility for the common education of the children residing in Iowa.<sup>4</sup> A manual developed by the Iowa Association of School Boards for local school board members states:

Article IX of the Constitution of the state of Iowa establishes the basis for the organization and operation of the state system of public education further delegating "management" to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald W. Rebore, A Handbook for School Board Members (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), 2.

<sup>2</sup>United States Constitution. Tenth Amendment.

<sup>3</sup>Rebore, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Iowa Constitution. Article IX, Section 7.

State Board of Public Instruction. In Iowa final authority for all matters pertaining to education resides in the general assembly.<sup>1</sup>

Although the state's authority in the arena of education is clear, nothing in federal law restricts the state's power to delegate responsibilities to local political bodies. The Iowa State Code confers the following powers and duties upon the Department of Public Instruction:

1. To adopt and prescribe approval standards, rules and regulations for all public and nonpublic schools in Iowa from pre-kindergarten through grade 12.
2. To direct the distribution of all state and federal funds to approved school districts.
3. To maintain a continuing research commission that will make recommendations concerning revisions, amendments and new provisions of laws affecting schools to the state legislature.<sup>2</sup>

Although the states clearly have the authority to govern education, most states have delegated many of these powers to local government units which are the boards of education. To maintain some control, state legislatures have prescribed minimum standards for curriculum and teacher certification.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Iowa Association of School Boards, The Iowa School Board Member: A Guide to Better Boardmanship, 1984-85 (Des Moines, 1984), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Code of Iowa, Section 257.

<sup>3</sup>Rebore, 4.

Iowa is no exception to this rule. Although the legislature and State Board of Public Instruction have established minimum standards for school programs and teacher education programs, the primary responsibility for providing educational opportunities to children in Iowa is placed upon the shoulders of local school board members.<sup>1</sup>

The Iowa Code states:

The local school board shall make rules for its own government and that of the directors, officers, teachers and pupils, and the care of school house grounds and property of the school corporation, and aid in the enforcement of the same, and require the performance of duties by said persons imposed by law and the rules.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the local school boards must govern their schools within the broad parameters of the minimum standards established by the state.

In 1647 the state of Massachusetts required all towns to establish and maintain schools, and it imposed a fine for failure to do so. Initially these schools were run by means of town meetings in which everyone could participate. As schools grew and this method of governance proved unwieldy, town selectmen were chosen to run the schools. School

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<sup>1</sup>Iowa Association of School Boards, 8.

<sup>2</sup>Code of Iowa, Section 274.1.

boards grew out of these early boards of selectmen.<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of small villages, rural districts and one-room schools, the school board members set school policies and administered the schools. There was no distinction between these two roles. As schools got bigger boards began to limit their role to that of policy making and turned administration of the schools over to the teaching staff and persons known as head teachers or head masters.<sup>2</sup>

One of the major changes in the history of school boards came in the 1840s when the Boston School District created the office of superintendent of schools.<sup>3</sup> In the years that followed the division of labor between policy making and administration began to grow. School boards restricted themselves more and more to setting general goals for the schools while professional administrators took over the role of overseeing the everyday operation of the schools. This national trend was duplicated in the state of Iowa.

The school board is an American invention which is necessary because of our decentralized education system.

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<sup>1</sup>Keith Goldhammer, The School Board (New York: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Goldhammer, forward v.

<sup>3</sup>Peter J. Cistone, Understanding School Boards (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1975), 20.

George Counts stated that, "The fundamental characteristic of public education in the United States is in the last analysis determined by the board that controls the school."<sup>1</sup> Ashley stressing the important role school boards play stated, "Collectively school board members are directors of the nation's largest enterprise with the single exception of national defense."<sup>2</sup> Rebore concurred with this assessment by saying that, "It is an understatement to say that membership on a school board is the most important government position in our community, state, or nation."<sup>3</sup>

As previously mentioned, early school boards did not distinguish between setting policies and administering the schools. Schools were small enough so that lay boards could do both. During the nineteenth century as schools grew in size boards began to turn daily administrative tasks over to professional administrators. More and more board members restricted themselves to setting the general policies and directions for the local schools.

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<sup>1</sup>Rebore, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Lloyd W. Ashley, The Effective School Board Member (Danville, IL: Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1968), Introd.

<sup>3</sup>Rebore, 5.

### Functions and Roles of School Boards

According to Goldhammer, local school boards are responsible for establishing policies in the following areas:

1. Instructional and activity programs
2. Employment of personnel
3. Taxation and budget
4. Provision of education related services
5. Management of buildings, property and grounds<sup>1</sup>

He also noted that citizens in communities saw the school board's responsibilities somewhat differently. They expected board members to play the following roles:

1. Promoters of public interest in education
2. Defenders and upholders of the accepted values of the community
3. Appellate body to hear complaints and grievances about education
4. Supervisors of the professional personnel in the district
5. Conservators of resources as to keep expenses reasonable
6. Promoters of individual rights and interests<sup>2</sup>

Goldhammer then went on to point out that school board members see their roles in the following light. They see themselves as:

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<sup>1</sup>Goldhammer, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Goldhammer, 11-12.



1. Developers of policies that help maintain harmonious school-community relationships
2. A court of appeals for citizens
3. Conservators of finance and representatives of taxpayers
4. Promoters of educational program improvement<sup>1</sup>

As can be readily seen, there is some agreement among these constituencies as to the appropriate role of the local school board. Where expectations differ there is the potential for conflict.

Rebore maintains that the role and functions of school boards center around two tasks. The first task is the development of creative policies that will give the school administrators the guidance necessary to carry out the mission of the school district. The second task is the evaluation, through the administrative staff, of the programs of the district and the personnel charged with implementing the program.<sup>2</sup> One of these tasks is meaningless without the other. The emphasis of this perspective is clearly on the board's role as policy maker, goal-setter and evaluator.

Ashley sees the major functions of the school board falling into the following four categories:

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<sup>1</sup>Goldhammer, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup>Rebore, 23.

1. Articulation of the goals of the school district
2. Selection of the school superintendent
3. Adoption of operating policies of the school district
4. General evaluation of the staff and the program<sup>1</sup>

Ashley's assessment of the functions of the school board is similar to Goldhammer's and Rebore's except that he places more emphasis on hiring and evaluating the superintendent.

Most literature reviewed agreed that adoption of operating policies is the number one priority of the school board. Ashley goes on to state that the school board has responsibility to make policies to cover the following areas:

1. Educational program and curriculum
2. Finance and budgets
3. Staffing and personnel
4. Instructional materials
5. Public relations
6. Board-staff relations<sup>2</sup>

Ashley's emphasis on board-staff relations and board operating procedures is the only area where his list differs from Goldhammer's. This is an interesting distinction in that Ashley clearly feels that the school board has the

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<sup>1</sup>Ashley, 26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

legal authority to determine local guidelines for board staff interaction.

The Iowa Code outlines the powers and duties of the local school board as follows:

1. Fix time and place of regular--and special--school board meetings (279.2).
2. Appoint a secretary and a treasurer (279.3).
3. Fill by appointment vacancies occurring between elections (279.6).
4. Make rules for its (the board's) governance and that of the directors, officers, employees, teachers and pupils, the school plant, school grounds and school buses (279.8).
5. Require bonds for individuals having custody of corporation funds or funds from extracurricular activities or other sources, and pay premiums from the general funds (279.8).
6. Determine attendance centers for the district and the particular school each child will attend (279.11).
7. Hire employees and determine the condition of employment (279.12).
8. To bargain and make contracts with teachers (279.13).
9. To hire and evaluate superintendent and principals (279.20).
10. To terminate administrators at any time for just cause (279.25).
11. To insure the district against lost property (279.28).
12. To pay out of general funds for supplies, insurance, and instructional materials (279.28).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 279.

13. To prescribe the minimal education requirements (280.3).
14. To determine major educational goals and objectives and implement a means of achieving them (280.12).<sup>2</sup>
15. To provide transportation services (285).<sup>3</sup>
16. To acquire, hold, convey, lease, rent and manage property, both real and personal (297).<sup>4</sup>
17. To incur indebtedness when authorized by the voters of the school corporation (296.1).<sup>4</sup>

Again it must be emphasized that these powers and duties are delegated by the state and they must be implemented within the parameters of state law and state minimum school standards.

#### The Qualities of an Effective School Board Member

Although there is general consensus on the functions and roles of school boards, there is less agreement on what characterizes an effective school board member. This judgment is a much more subjective one and it seems to be dependent to some degree on whether one is a school board member, a school administrator, or a patron of a school district. There is an ongoing debate about where the role of the board as policy maker leaves off and the role of the

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<sup>1</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 280.

<sup>2</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 285.

<sup>3</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 297.

<sup>4</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 296.

administrator begins.

According to Ashley, the qualities that make a good school board member are the same as those which make for success in other major enterprises. They are intelligence, social conscience, organizational ability and an understanding of how boards work. He like many other writers on this topic is much clearer about what board members should not do than what they should do. Good board members should avoid the following:

1. Interference with the day-to-day details of administration.
2. Refusing to support or supporting programs for personal reasons.
3. Favoritism toward relatives or friends in the community.
4. Promises or commitments to constituents before issues are fully discussed by the board.
5. Cliques on the board.
6. Use of board membership for personal political gain.
7. Indulgence in petty criticism of the administration.
8. Divulgence of personal information obtained because of board status.
9. Acting individually rather than in concert with the total board.
10. Taking gifts from school suppliers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ashley, 43-45.

Tuttle feels that the essential qualities of a good school board member are:

1. Integrity--Being principled and honest
2. Perseverance--Persistence in face of difficulties
3. Faith--Optimism
4. Ability to plan--Organizational skills
5. Vision--Ability to see the future and the total picture
6. Initiative--Self-starting
7. Courage--Inner strength to move forward despite diversity<sup>1</sup>

Tuttle feels that the good school board members are mediators rather than polarizers. They pull factions in the district together through frank and honest communication, and operate with the common good of their total constituency in mind. They communicate with all groups in the community, and get involved with their state school board association, attending meetings whenever possible.<sup>2</sup>

The Iowa Association of School Boards states that effective school board members possess the following:

1. A conviction that public education is important.
2. The ability and willingness to make tough decisions.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Mowbroy Tuttle, School Leadership in America (Danville, IL: Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1965), 28.

<sup>2</sup>Tuttle, 29.

3. A commitment to the democratic process.
4. Time and energy to devote to board work.
5. The ability to accept the will of the majority.
6. Respect for teaching as a profession, and for educators.
7. Ability to communicate well with others.
8. Courage.
9. Support for the superintendent's authorized function.
10. Willingness to share responsibility and acclaim for the board's decision.
11. Ability to accept and evaluate criticism and advice objectively.
12. Ability to avoid personality conflicts.
13. Willingness to improve his/her personal boardmanship qualities.<sup>1</sup>

#### Major Causes of School Board Dysfunction

When both school board members and school administrators have clear perceptions of their roles, when they communicate openly with each other and with all elements of the community and when they possess the skills necessary to fulfill their roles, schools in the United States run smoothly and effectively. Because school board members and administrators are human beings one of these elements may be missing causing dysfunction to occur. This dysfunction has been attributed to a number of key factors

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<sup>1</sup>Iowa Association of School Boards, 18-19.

by numerous school board watchers.

Tuttle lists the following stumbling blocks to school board effectiveness:

1. Domination of local board member by partisan rather than public loyalties.
2. Lack of written policies which leads to confusion and misunderstanding.
3. Overemphasis of the board on housekeeping and business at the expense of the school program.
4. Abuse of open meeting laws and guidelines.
5. Over use of standing board committees which often leads to board divisiveness.
6. Fiscal dependence on other government bodies or groups (city council, etc.).
7. Dual administrative functions--the separating of business and program administrative functions between two administrators.<sup>1</sup>

One of the key factors in effective school board operations is the relation between the board and the superintendent. It is a focus which runs throughout the literature on school boards. Dykes cites the following conditions which create problems between school boards and superintendents:

1. The condition that exists when the board is not regularly informed, by the superintendent, of what is going on. This leads to confusion and lack of confidence in the superintendent.
2. The condition that exists when board members start acting as individuals rather than as part of a team. Legal authority is vested only in board

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<sup>1</sup>Tuttle, 42-45.



members as a group and no actions or commitments made by individual board members have any validity. They only cause divisiveness and misunderstanding in the community and among staff.

3. The condition that exists when standing board subcommittees are over used. Although the literature is not consistent on this, Dykes believes that use of such committees is divisive and injurious to board team work.
4. The condition that exists when board members see themselves representing certain elements or factions in the community rather than the community at large. This factionalism undermines school board operations.
5. The condition that exists when there are no clearly defined board operating procedures. Lack of such mutually agreed upon decisions cause confusion and uncertainty and can lead to divisiveness.<sup>1</sup>

These conditions can be caused by poor execution of responsibilities by either board members or the superintendent. At times the blame may be shared by both parties.

There is general agreement among writers that the relationship between the school board and the superintendent is key to effective board operations. Goldhammer notes that, when there is the existence of ambiguity in the definition of the respective roles of the superintendent and members of the board, conflicts develop.<sup>2</sup> Dykes states that boards and administrators commonly disagree on what is

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<sup>1</sup>Archie R. Dykes, School Board and Superintendent: Their Effective Working Relationships (Danville, IL: Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1965), 131-58.

<sup>2</sup>Goldhammer, 36.

policy and what is administration. A national survey conducted in the mid 1960s showed that 21 percent of all school districts reported problems in this area. He goes on to maintain that there is really no clear cut line that can be drawn between policy and administration. It is therefore extremely important for a school board and a superintendent to work out an agreement on a mutually acceptable division of responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>

Tuttle defined policies as "principles adopted by a board of education to chart a course of action for its administrator and to define the limits within which he/she shall exercise judgment and discretion."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that poor policy results from a defensive, preventative or corrective intent while good policy is outward looking and expansive and results from an approving, encouraging, and constructive intent.<sup>3</sup>

After studying the patterning of school board members' roles for a period of twelve years, Arnold Hagan developed two ratios which he felt governed board-superintendent relationships. They were:

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<sup>1</sup>Dykes, 110.

<sup>2</sup>Tuttle, 49.

<sup>3</sup>Tuttle, 51.

1. The Confidence Ratio--The degree to which school board members felt confident that the superintendent was carrying out their policies effectively.
2. The Intervention Ratio--The degree to which school board members felt it necessary to intervene in the staff and community relationships in order for their intentions to be carried out.<sup>1</sup>

Hagan found that there was an inverse relationship between the two ratios. When the confidence ratio was high the board intervened less in day-to-day school operations. When the confidence ratio was low, the rate of board intervention in everyday administration increased. This study reinforced the idea that an on-going open flow of information between the board and the superintendent is critical to effective school operations.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years the job of school superintendent has become characterized by insecurity and high mobility. Rebores found that the failure of many superintendents was due to:

1. Weak rapport with the school board brought on by superintendents' refusal to accept or to seek criticism.
2. Lack of staff respect. Without this respect the district structure crumbles from within and little gets done.

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<sup>1</sup>Arnold J. Hagan, "An Exploratory Study of the Patterning and Structuring of the Roles Played by School Board Members Through a Particular Time Sequence" (Ed.D. Diss., Univ. of Oregon, 1955), 161-64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

3. Poor communications up and down the chain of command.<sup>1</sup>

He summarizes by theorizing that most of the above situations could be avoided if there were a thorough annual evaluation of staff, superintendent and the school board members. Although staff members were usually evaluated, Rebores found that in far too many instances there was no effective annual evaluation of the superintendent and school board members.<sup>2</sup>

The Iowa Association of School Boards puts a heavy emphasis on written school policies in maintaining effective school operations. Its handbook for school board members states that "A school board without a good set of written policies is like a boat adrift in an open sea. It has no guidelines to follow or document to show the public the direction the board is taking in operating the school system."<sup>3</sup> It states that developing such written policies is the board's most important function.

The Social Composition of School Boards

The most significant decisions of a board of education have to do with the basic purpose of education and the relation of the school to the social order. It is rather

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<sup>1</sup>Rebores, 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Iowa Association of School Boards, 10.

generally agreed that the social composition of school boards has a significant impact on educational policy making.<sup>1</sup>

Having said that, it is important to point out that in most parts of the United States the legal requirements for becoming eligible for school board membership are minimal. The Iowa Code requires that a:

School officer or member of the board shall, at the time of election or appointment be an eligible elector of the corporation or sub-district . . . . No member of the board of directors of any school district, or his or her spouse, shall receive compensation directly from the school board.<sup>2</sup>

A qualified elector in Iowa must possess the following characteristics:

1. United States citizenship
2. An age of eighteen years or older
3. Registration to vote in the school district<sup>3</sup>

Iowa law requires a board member to take an oath to support the constitutions of the United States and of the state of Iowa. It requires that every school district be governed by a board of at least five members. Districts with a population of more than fifteen thousand are required to

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<sup>1</sup>George S. Counts, Social Composition of Boards of Education (New York: Ayer Company, 1969), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 277.26.

<sup>3</sup>Iowa Association of School Boards, 10.

have a board of seven members. The voters in any district may authorize a seven-member board regardless of their size.<sup>1</sup> Board members are elected to three-year terms and there is no limit to the number of terms an individual may hold office.<sup>2</sup>

Before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the elector requirement would for all practical purposes prevent women from becoming school board members. After 1920 most of the laws including Iowa's would appear to be openly neutral in regard to the sex of school board members. However, tradition and the unwritten code by which communities operate were not so neutral on this topic.

Formal or legal opportunity determines who may seek office; effective or practical opportunity indicates who can actually seek office. Among the critical determinants of effective opportunity that have been identified by studies of political participation are factors such as social status (occupation, income, education, family), political resources, talents, motivation, age and sex.<sup>3</sup> Studies of school board membership conducted between 1900 and 1985 have consistently shown that school board members are not chosen

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<sup>1</sup>Code of Iowa, Chapter 277.23.

<sup>2</sup>Iowa Association of School Boards, 10.

<sup>3</sup>L. W. Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), 62.

in proportionate numbers from all population groups and are not representative of the population at large.<sup>1</sup>

In one of the earlier studies of school boards in America (1907), Nearing discovered that most school board members were found in a small number of occupations. He found that 61 percent of all school board members came from the following occupational groups in descending order:

1. Merchants
2. Manufacturers
3. Bankers, brokers and real estate
4. Lawyers
5. Doctors
6. Dentists<sup>2</sup>

Given the well-documented discrimination against women in the above professions during that period of time, it can be concluded that there were very few female school board members.

In 1904 Chancellor asserted that merchants and manufacturers make the best school board members. He justified this assertion by explaining that people in these professions deal with large bodies of men with important business interests. They also handle large amounts of money

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<sup>1</sup>Cistone, 53.

<sup>2</sup>Scott Nearing, "Who's Who on Our School Boards," School and Society 5 (January 1907): 5.

and property and are not frightened by large bond issues. He then went on to describe persons who make bad board members. This list included young men, unsuccessful men, retired men, politicians, newspaper men, poorly educated men, men in subordinate positions, and all women.<sup>1</sup> It was very clear where Chancellor stood on the position of women on school boards.

In 1922 Struble did a study of school boards in 169 cities with over 2,500 population. His findings were similar to those of Nearing's fifteen years earlier. Sixty percent of all the school board members he surveyed were merchants, bankers, lawyers, physicians and business executives. He went on to note that only 54 of the 761 board members were from the ranks of manual laborers.<sup>2</sup>

In 1927 George Counts did the first thorough study of school boards in America. He again found that close to 70 percent of all school board members were professionals, businessmen and farmers, with farmer-dominated boards in rural environments. Counts felt that the occupations of board members provide a particularly valuable measure of the breadth and variety of interests and points of view

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<sup>1</sup>William Eastbrook Chancellor, Our Schools, Their Administration and Supervision (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1915), 12-13.

<sup>2</sup>George G. Struble, "A Study of School Board Personnel," American School Board Journal 65 (October 1922): 48-49, 137-38.



reflected on the board. Vocation is very instrumental in shaping one's social philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Counts was the first to seriously study the issue of female involvement on school boards. He found that approximately 10 percent of board members were women. Large city districts were in the vanguard in this respect with 14 percent female membership on boards. The significant increase of female board members during the 1920s was attributed to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment which gave women the right to vote. Seventy-five percent of all boardwomen were homemakers and the rest from varied professions. Counts also noted that there was a one to six ratio of male board members to male board presidents, while there was a one to twenty-nine ratio of female board presidents to female board members. He reached the conclusion that discrimination against women on school boards was the norm rather than the exception.<sup>2</sup>

Counts noted that:

much has been said about the peculiarly intimate relation of women to education and the care of the child. To some this interest in the younger generation, which is assumed to have a biological foundation, gives to women a natural right to direct the role of the school.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Counts, 50.

<sup>2</sup>Counts, 41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

This is the earliest attempt in the literature to link the female parenting function with school governance.

The same study showed that the increase of women on boards was due to the first women being named to all-male boards. There appeared to be resistance toward increasing the number of women on individual boards beyond one. People were beginning to accept that the feminine point of view should be represented on school boards, but there was little tolerance for female control of school boards.<sup>1</sup>

Other findings of the Counts' study were as follows:

1. Elected boards have a somewhat wider social base including more women than appointed boards.
2. Boards where members were compensated actually had more upper class representation. This finding was somewhat surprising and Counts recommended further study on this subject.
3. Approximately 57 percent of board members had children in public schools which upholds a traditional tenet that public school board members ought to be parents. This percentage was less in urban school districts.

As a result of this study, Counts expressed concern about the homogeneity of representation on school boards and agreed with the labor view that the upper class usually pursue their own interests on school boards. He believed that to permit one class or element to control education was dangerous. He felt that schools should broaden the horizons

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<sup>1</sup>Counts, 45.

for children not indoctrinate them.<sup>1</sup>

In a 1949 study of Louisiana school boards, Hunter found that most board members came from select socio-economic groups in the community and had enjoyed success in economic endeavors.<sup>2</sup> Goldhammer, too, concluded on the basis of his investigations that although school board members felt they represented the entire community, they really only represented a segment of it. The views of minority groups, women and laborers were often ignored.<sup>3</sup>

In 1975 Cistone noted that almost all studies of school boards between 1900 and 1975 showed that the stereotypical school board member has been a middle-aged male, white, professional, with children in school, who has been active in the political and social life of the community. He felt that this oligarchic self-perpetuation was due to the role that incumbent school board members play in recruiting their predecessors. Incumbent board members instigate the candidacy of others and engage in the act of sponsoring their candidacy. This leads to a continuity in practice and policy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Counts, 90.

<sup>2</sup>J. A. Hunter, "Social Composition of Louisiana Parish School Boards," American School Board Journal 119 (October and November 1949): 17-19.

<sup>3</sup>Goldhammer, 90.

<sup>4</sup>Cistone, 70-71.

Although Cistone supported broader community representation on school boards, he did not feel that it was theoretically necessary that a board mirror the cultural and class composition of its community to serve it effectively. Research shows that very often the culture of the board itself has dominated other cultural inputs. However, on the practical side diversity among members may make council actions more representative.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that Cistone does not outwardly discuss the gender factor in board representation, although he may have meant to include gender within the realm of cultural representation.

The reference of Cistone to the culture of the school board is the first reference in the literature to school boards as cultural systems. School boards are cultural systems which indoctrinate new members into the culture. One only has to read the numerous handbooks for school board members put out by various state associations of school boards to understand this concept. New school board members are bombarded with the following ideas:

1. Inservice for school board members is desirable.
2. Unanimous votes are desirable whenever possible.
3. Board members should serve all constituents impartially.

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<sup>1</sup>Cistone, 70-71.

4. Party politics and school boards should not mix.<sup>1</sup>  
Cistone states that these cultural tenets tend to dull any new perspective which a new representative (female or black) brings to the board.

Since the early 1970s the American Association of School Boards has done an annual survey of their membership. These surveys have reinforced most of the findings discussed up to this point on the social makeup of school board members in relationship to education, race, parental status, occupation and socio-economic status. They do however show a renewed surge in the involvement of female board members between 1970 and 1985.

The percentage of females on school boards remained at about 12 percent from 1927 through 1973. At its 1974 national meeting the American Association of School Boards passed a resolution to support the inclusion of more women on school boards. It was stated that school boards and public education are hurt by the lack of balance between men and women on school boards. It went on to state that:

1. Women on school boards often exhibit comparable and sometimes superior personal qualities in education and organizational experience.
2. There was an informal quota system that seems to be working against greater female involvement on boards.

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<sup>1</sup>Cistone, 70-71.

3. Most board members (both men and women) expressed the belief the boards need a woman represented, but at the same time thought more than one woman on the board was undesirable.<sup>1</sup>

This was the first time the American School Board Association formally recognized that lack of female involvement was a problem and put its support behind attracting more female school board members.

In 1986 the Association's survey showed that female membership on school boards had risen to 36 percent, a meteoric increase from the 12 percent in 1973. It also showed that school board members were increasingly well educated (66 percent had four years of college), had professional and management positions (59 percent), were married (94 percent), and had children in school (65 percent). Minority representation had increased to approximately 10 percent.<sup>2</sup> These findings again are similar to earlier results with the exception of female and minority representation.

Crowley and Johnson, in a 1978 study of thirty-seven school boards in New Jersey, gathered the following demographic data on board members. Sixty-four percent of

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<sup>1</sup>"It's No Accident that Men Outnumber Women on School Boards Nine to One," American School Board Journal 161 (May 1974): 53.

<sup>2</sup>"Seventh Annual Survey of School Board Members," American School Board Journal 172 (January 1985): 29-32.

men and 55 percent of women had college degrees. Twenty-nine percent of men and 16 percent of women had graduate degrees. Ninety-six percent of the male board members were employed full-time outside their home as compared to 41 percent of female board members. Forty-three percent of male board members worked as managers or administrators, while only 15 percent of the women worked in that capacity. Approximately 71 percent of both male and female board members had school-age children. Board members were between thirty and fifty years of age. Men were usually members of labor, business, professional, fraternal or veterans organizations, while the women were members of political, youth or school service organizations. Approximately 20 percent of both males and females had been office holders in other public organizations. Twenty-two percent of women and 32 percent of men stated they were interested in holding other political offices after they left the school board.<sup>1</sup>

In 1977 Doran stated that the typical woman on American school boards was in her late thirties, affluent, married and a mother, did not work outside the home, was college educated, belonged to several organizations, had chaired committees and was experienced in dealing with power

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<sup>1</sup>Crowley and Johnson, 1-2.

structures.<sup>1</sup>

Six years later in 1983, Marshall and Heller profiled female board members nationwide as being thirty to forty-nine years of age, having a relatively high level of education (30 percent had at least a B.A. degree), married (89 percent), relatively affluent (60 percent over \$40,000 family income), employed only part-time or held no job outside the home (78 percent), resident in the district approximately twelve years and at the time of their study had been a board member four years.<sup>2</sup>

In 1972 Mullins found that female school board members were very strong persons who had to juggle the demands of career, family, and school board responsibilities. She also discovered that most female board members were serving as the first and/or the sole female board member in their districts.<sup>3</sup> In 1974 Fishel and Pottker reported that although approximately 12 percent of school board members were women, over one-half of all the school boards in

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<sup>1</sup>Bernadette Doran, "The Feminist Surge has Hit School Boards and They May Never be the Same," American School Board Journal 164 (April 1977): 25-27.

<sup>2</sup>Stephanie A. Marshall and Mel Heller, "Women Could Revolutionize School Governance," American School Board Journal 170 (August 1983): 31-32.

<sup>3</sup>Carolyn Mullins, "The Plight of the Board Women," American School Board Journal 159 (February 1972): 27.



America had no women represented on them.<sup>1</sup>

In a study of California board women done in 1977, Ferguson found that 67 percent of female board members had been previously involved in civic or school-related organizations such as the Parent-Teacher Association or the League of Women Voters. This is similar to the participation rate of men in community service organizations such as the Kiwanis Club, the Lions Club, etc. A number of researchers have noted a similar difference in the nature of organizational involvement of male and female board members.<sup>2</sup>

Doran's study of board members in the same year confirmed Ferguson's findings about the organizational involvement of female school board members. She went on to say that many female board members have formal training in education as well as direct teaching and school experience. This professional training in the field of education was less prevalent among male board members. She also emphasized that female board members often have had considerably more contact with the schools before they came on the board. This was because as parents they were the

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Fishel and Janice Pottker, "Women in Educational Governance: A Statistical Portrait," Contemporary Education 45 (July-August 1974): 4-7.

<sup>2</sup>Regina H. Ferguson, "California Women School Board Members: Concerns, Priorities and Self-Perceived Effectiveness," DAI 38 (1977): 3831-A.

ones who generally communicated with the schools about their children's education. Like other studies she found that the great majority of female school board members were homemakers. Doran maintained that it is no accident that the overwhelming majority of female school board members list their occupation as homemaker. Women who work outside the home have other channels for leadership and other reinforcements. It is the well-educated woman at home who realizes that public service offers a way for her to use her talents and resources. It will be a while before women in business gain the status within their business to have the time men have to get involved on boards.<sup>1</sup>

The findings of a study of New Jersey school boards by Konick in 1978 confirmed most of the findings on social profiles of school board members already noted in this chapter. His study included the issue of political affiliation. He found that Republicans outnumbered Democrats on New Jersey school boards but that female board members were more apt to be Democrats than were male board members.<sup>2</sup>

To summarize the literature on social makeup of school

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<sup>1</sup>Doran, 26.

<sup>2</sup>Emery Konick, Jr., "Politics, Recruitment Patterns, and Women: An Analysis of School Board Membership in Selected New Jersey School Districts," DAI 39 (1978): 2659-A.

boards it is fair to state that prior to 1910 women had little involvement in the governance of America's schools. Between 1910 and 1925 the percentage of women on school boards increased from 3 to 12 percent. This coincided with that period in history when women won the right to vote in elections. The involvement of women on school boards then leveled off and remained stable through 1973. Between 1973 and 1986 there was a meteoric rise in female involvement on school boards to 36 percent.

School board members, regardless of their sex, have tended to be well educated, to come from the socio-economic upper and upper-middle class, to be married, to be active in the community and to have school-age children. The three primary areas where the literature showed distinct differences in the backgrounds of male and female board members were:

1. Occupation. The majority of female board members were homemakers while the majority of males worked for a salary outside the home.
2. Organizational Membership. Male school board members were involved with professional, business and community service organizations while women tended to be involved in political, social service and school-related organizations.
3. Contacts with Schools. Female board members had more direct contact with the schools before they became board members than men did. This was because of their greater involvement with school-related organizations such as the PTA, as well as their traditional primary parenting role within the family.

### Motivation for School Board Involvement

There are diverse reasons why thousands of Americans each year donate much of their personal time to school board activities. Some are viewed as much more noble than others. In 1958 Gross studied the motivation of 200 school board members, both from the board members' perspective and from their superintendents' perspective. The following chart reflects his findings:

Motivation of School Board Members as Seen by  
Themselves and by Their Superintendent  
(Gross)

	<u>School Board Member</u>	<u>Superintendent</u>
1. Civic duty	80	64
2. Representing specific group	26	29
3. For political experience	9	21
4. To insure satisfactory spending on education	12	7
5. Dissatisfaction with their child's education	11	3
6. To cut spending on education	4	5
7. To remove the superintendent	5	4
8. To benefit friends	1	5
9. Other	48	32

Gross found that the most common reason board members gave for their running for the board was their civic duty, the sense that they owed something to their community. The second most common motivation was to represent the interests and needs of a particular group of people in the school district. For others, motivation was linked to their desire to increase or decrease funding for education (raise or lower taxes). Some were unhappy with their children's

education and sought membership on the school board to improve it. There was some similarity in the way which board members and superintendents assessed board members' motivation. More superintendents than board members felt that board members ran for the school board to obtain political experience and to use it as a stepping stone to higher political office.

Gross found no discernable relationship between occupation, sex, marital status or education and motivation for board involvement. He found that board members with children and older board members were more positively motivated than were board members without children or younger board members. He concluded that Catholic board members were more negatively motivated than other board members.<sup>1</sup>

Four years later, Gormire, in an Oregon study of the reasons school board members seek office, listed motivations in the following order:

1. General interest in education.
2. Civic duty or community interest.
3. Influence of friends and relatives.
4. Desire to see their school-age children get a good education.
5. The feeling that they had the capacity to serve.

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<sup>1</sup>N. C. Gross, Who Runs Our Schools? (New York: Wiley, 1958), 73.

6. Representation of a particular interest group in the community.
7. Opposition to current school board policies.
8. Self-satisfaction.
9. Interest in efficient taxation.
10. Were appointed to board.

Civic duty and general interest in education were the most common motivations expressed by board members. The influence of friends and relatives and desire to insure good education for their children were close behind. Representation of particular interest groups ranked lower in the Gormire study than it did in the earlier study by Gross.<sup>1</sup>

Some writers have linked the motivation of many female board members directly to their gender. Mullins felt that many female school board candidates ran to prove that females could be capable board members or because they felt a female perspective was needed on the school boards. Also high on the motivation list of women was a genuine interest in education and the feeling that she was qualified and capable of being a good board member. Mullins went on to say that sex was often a built-in campaign issue for female

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<sup>1</sup>Leonard Gormire, "A Study of Attitudes of School Board Members as They Relate to Their Reasons for Seeking Office," Oregon School Study Council Bulletin 6, no. 2 (1962): 7.

board candidates.<sup>1</sup> Fishel and Pottker, however, agreed with earlier studies that show no difference in the motivation of male and female board members to run for office.<sup>2</sup>

In a 1976 study of male and female board members in Indiana, Gorgone found that board members, teachers and superintendents all felt that the women's rights' movement had a direct impact on the increasing number of women of school boards. This idea gains credence when one considers that the two periods that showed rapid growth in the numbers of females on school boards coincided with the years when women won the right to vote, 1915-1925, and the period in the late 1970s and early 1980s when there was a concerted effort to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.<sup>3</sup>

Ferguson, in a 1977 study of California board women found that the first motivator for board candidacy was interest in school affairs and the second was civic duty.<sup>4</sup> This is consistent with a number of studies that show that women's motivation for running for the school board may be more specifically linked to school issues, while men are

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<sup>1</sup>Mullins, "Plight," 28.

<sup>2</sup>Fishel and Pottker, 87.

<sup>3</sup>Kathleen Gorgone, "A Comparison of Perspectives Held by Superintendents, School Board Members and Teacher Representatives Regarding the Role of Women School Board Members in the State of Indiana," DAI 37 (1976): 5485-A.

<sup>4</sup>Ferguson, Abstract.

more often motivated by a more general civic duty.

Doran points out that the rapid increase of women on school boards in the past decade coincides with the passage of Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972. This federal legislation made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender in educational programs. She quotes Dr. Shirley McCune of the National Education Association as saying "A combination of push and drive, Title IX, the influence of the women's movement and the support of women's organizations were all factors in this substantial increase of female board members after 1972." Many of these board members came out of the League of Women Voters, Parent-Teacher Associations and teaching experience. Running for school board was a natural outgrowth of this experience.<sup>1</sup>

Crowley and Johnson reinforced the idea that women's motivation was more focused on education, while men focused more on general community service or financial concerns. This may be an outgrowth of the fact that women had more direct experience with the schools than men when they came onto the board. Women brought to the board their experiences with the PTA, League of Women Voters and school volunteer organizations. They had been in the schools more often and therefore had more specific program-related motivation for seeking board membership. In their parental

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<sup>1</sup>Doran, 25-26.



role, mothers of school-age children had more direct contact with school programs and facilities than did fathers.<sup>1</sup>

### Mode of Governance

School board members, like individuals in other roles, exhibit a variety of approaches to carrying out their responsibilities. There have been a number of studies that peripherally examined the governance styles of school board members and made comparisons between male and female school board members.

It has been noted in this review that the majority of female school board members studied up to this date have been homemakers. Mullins, in her survey of school board members and superintendents, found that both groups felt that women, because of their homemaker status, had more time to visit schools, talk to staff, students and parents and generally more time for school board activities. Female school board members felt they were better listeners than male school board members and more approachable to their constituents.<sup>2</sup>

Superintendents, on the other hand, seemed to depict a relatively negative attitude toward the performance of

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<sup>1</sup>Crowley and Johnson, 7.

<sup>2</sup>Carolyn Mullins, "To Put it Mildly, Many Superintendents Do Not Like or Want Female School Board Members," American School Board Journal 161 (September 1974): 29.

female board members. They claimed that female board members got upset too easily and were easily sidetracked by minor issues during board meetings. They had a negative perspective of the additional time available to the homemaker board member. Superintendents felt that because of the time they had available for board activities, female board members tended to actually administer the schools rather than see that they were administered. One superintendent felt that women listen too much to the crackpots and malcontents in the district. Other superintendents interviewed by Mullins openly displayed prejudice against female school board members.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand in Gorgone's study of school board members in Indiana, she found that there was no significant difference in the amounts of time male and female school board members spent on board business. She found that male and female board members initiated motions at board meetings at the same rate and had similar rates of success in getting backing for their motions. Gorgone's findings again differed from those of Mullins in that she discerned no difference in the rate of communications between male and female school board members and their constituents.<sup>2</sup>

In her study of the perceptions of Texas female board

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<sup>1</sup>Mullins, To Put it Mildly, 29.

<sup>2</sup>Gorgone, 177-83.

members, Lowe found that female board members felt that they took more time to research and pursue information before making decisions than did their male counterparts. They felt that they were no more emotional than male board members and that their relationship with the superintendent was no different than that of the men.<sup>1</sup>

Doran found that female school board members came to school board meetings better prepared than their male counterparts. They were more apt to have read all the materials that the school administration had mailed them prior to the board meeting and they may have visited a building site or program area to see for themselves. This again may be a natural outgrowth from the fact that the large majority of female board members involved in these earlier studies did not work for a salary outside the home. This, theoretically, allowed them more time to prepare for board meetings and to visit school sites. Doran also found that female board members had training in education and direct teaching and school experience. This training and professional experience was reflected in the specificity of questions asked during school board meetings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Ella Brazil Lowe, "The Role, Position, and Perceptions of Women School Board Members in Texas," DAI 37 (1976): 3313-A.

<sup>2</sup>Doran, 26.

In their New Jersey study, Crowley and Johnson concluded that there may be some subtle alterations in the functioning of school boards as the number of women involved increases. They found that female school board members tended to be more active than men in making contacts with the schools and in talking to school patrons. As did Doran, they found that female board members ask more specific and probing questions at board meetings than did their male counterparts. Again this may be a result of coming to board meetings better prepared and having more direct contacts with the schools than do males on the board. They also came to the conclusion that female board members who worked outside the home did not spend more time on school board business than did male board members.<sup>1</sup>

In their 1983 study of school board members in Dupage County, Illinois, Marshall and Heller concluded that female school board members had more experience than their male counterparts at running organizations, with most of their experience coming in Parent-Teacher Organizations, the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women (AAUW). This did not translate into formal leadership positions on school boards, however, as males were much more apt to be board president. The researchers felt that this trend was slowly beginning to change. An

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<sup>1</sup>Crowley and Johnson, 7.

interesting highlight of this study was that female school board members tended to view their role more politically than male board members and they were more apt to have perceived political constituencies.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of their study, Marshall and Heller concluded that female board members see the school as a legislative body characterized by open debate and split votes. Men, they concluded, tend to act as a board of trustees with general goal setting and personnel review. They also are less open to public scrutiny in their board processes. On the basis of their findings, Marshall and Heller conclude that the following four changes will occur as more women get elected to school boards.

1. There will be more board involvement in school decision making. The distinction between policy and administration will be relaxed. Superintendents will become more like a consultant to the school board.
2. There will be more emphasis on orientation for new school board members and these orientations will focus on the roles of the school board and the administration.
3. Administrators and board members will increasingly re-examine their perceptions of male and female roles.
4. The Board and administration will meet more often on working sessions.

They also concluded that the potential for conflict between superintendents and school boards will increase as the

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall and Heller, 31.

number of women on boards increases.<sup>1</sup>

Several studies seemed to show that female board members did more formal networking with their peers. In an extended study of Dupage County school board members, Marshall found that female board members had more contacts with board members from other school districts. They were also more involved in lobbying the state legislature. There was no effort to determine if these added activities were related to the homemaker status of many female board members.<sup>2</sup>

#### Priorities of Board Members

The American Association of School Boards conducts an annual survey of its members, to determine where they stand on various educational issues and how they prioritize educational needs. A review of the public reports of these surveys showed that only since 1985 has comparative data for males and females been published. There have been several other articles and studies which have investigated this issue, but none were state wide or included both male and female board members in the study sample.

In its annual survey the American Association of

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall and Heller, 32.

<sup>2</sup>Stephanie Pace Marshall, "An Analysis of the Profiles, Roles, Functions and Behavior of Women on School Boards of Education in Dupage County, Illinois" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola Univ. of Chicago, 1983), 571-76.

School Boards questioned board members about their positions on issues within the following five categories: (1) discipline, (2) curriculum, (3) federal involvement, (4) instructional quality, and (5) educational finance.<sup>1</sup> Other studies have included the area of educational equity. In this component of the review of literature, these studies will be summarized in chronological order.

There has been much speculation in recent years on whether female board members, because of their unique educational and life experiences, may bring new priorities to the realm of educational policy making. Mullins felt that the views of women were important on boards. She claimed that they look at and ask about things that might never occur to men. She listed several areas where she felt differences existed between male and female board members. Her findings, based on interviews with female board members, were as follows:

1. Women were more apt to emphasize child-centered issues. This was because the traditional motherhood role and close parental relationship with their own children made them more attuned to the needs of children.
2. Women gave higher emphasis to public relations and communications with patrons.
3. Women put more emphasis on curriculum issues than male board members.

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Underwood and Jim C. Fortune, "Sixth Annual Survey of School Board Members," American School Board Journal 171 (January 1984): 26.

4. Women were more progressive and change oriented while men were more conservative and status quo oriented.<sup>1</sup>

This study was an unscientific survey of board members and did not include male school board members.

In a survey of school superintendents at the National Association of School Boards annual meeting two years later in 1974, Mullins found that many superintendents viewed the above priorities of female board members in negative terms. In terms of public relations and communications, they felt women were more apt to listen to "crackpots" and "malcontents" in the district. They were wary of the emphasis that female board members placed on curriculum issues. The literature consistently shows that superintendents have steered school boards away from involvement in curriculum issues feeling that this area was in the administrative and professional domain.<sup>2</sup> Literature on the responsibilities of school boards reviewed earlier in this chapter does not support the administrators' position on this issue. It is clear board members have the responsibility to make policy related to curriculum. The real issue may be where policy making on curriculum ends and where administration of curriculum begins. The superintendents also felt that male board members gave

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<sup>1</sup>Mullins, "Plight," 29.

<sup>2</sup>Mullins, "To Put it Mildly," 29.



higher priority to issues of educational finance and that they were more capable than female board members in this area.<sup>1</sup>

Some researchers have linked the social makeup of the school board to the emphasis placed on equal educational opportunity or educational equity. Fishel and Pottker found that all-male boards were less apt to take action to reduce and eliminate sex-role stereotyping, bias and discrimination in employment and educational programs. Female board members who had directly experienced sex discrimination in educational programs were more apt to be sensitive to the issue as a school board member. They asserted that discrimination in education will never truly end until school boards reflect the social makeup of the students they serve.<sup>2</sup>

A 1976 survey of superintendents, teachers and school board members in Indiana reinforced the findings of Mullins as well as Fishel and Pottker, but also found other areas of differences between male and female school board members. Gorgone found that female board members had more interest than male board members in three areas.

1. Regulations concerning supervisory personnel (Administrative Quality).

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<sup>1</sup>Mullins, "To Put it Mildly," 29.

<sup>2</sup>Fishel and Pottker, 87.

2. Employment, retention, and dismissal of certified and noncertified personnel (Instructional Quality).
3. Expulsion of students (Discipline).

She found that male school board members were more interested in:

1. Budget and finance issues (Fiscal Responsibility).
2. Buildings, grounds, capital outlay and construction.
3. Purchasing of equipment and supplies.<sup>1</sup>

These findings reinforce earlier findings that female school board members give more priority to people issues while male board members give more emphasis to money, facilities and equipment issues.

In a 1977 survey of female school board members in California conducted by Ferguson, 50 percent of the women perceived their main area of interest on the board to be curriculum. They also felt they were highly effective in program and staff evaluation, personnel issues, school discipline and school maintenance. The only findings that contradict the findings of earlier studies is the finding related to school maintenance.<sup>2</sup> There was no attempt in this study to survey male board members or to compare male and female board members.

Doran interviewed school board members about their

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<sup>1</sup>Gorgone, 177-83.

<sup>2</sup>Ferguson, Abstract.

perceptions of males and females on school boards in the same year. She included the following quotes from individual school board members:

The first boards to comply with Title IX self-evaluation requirements were boards which had females represented (Title IX is the federal legislation making sex discrimination in education illegal).

Men are physical-plant oriented and women are student oriented.

If school boards have been top heavy in the three Bs: business, busing and bonds, because of the predominance of males, women on school boards may bring up more forcefully a crucial concern, the student. I expect the boards will begin to take greater interest in the curriculum, than in basketball coaches and leaky roofs.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotes support earlier findings but imply a new one. This is that male board members may place higher emphasis on athletic programs in schools than do female school board members.

Crowley and Johnson found that women gave higher priority to public relations and the quality of the curriculum than men did. They also found that female board members gave greater support for teacher salary increases than did men. They conjectured that the greater interest of women in curriculum and instruction was a potential source of friction with school superintendents, who consider this to be their domain. They are wary of board members who

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<sup>1</sup>Doran, 26.

wander into buildings and talk to staff.<sup>1</sup>

Another study which was conducted in selected New Jersey school districts found differences in the support levels of male and female school board members for increased funding for education. Konick found that female board members were more supportive of a state income tax to support education than were male board members. There is some evidence in the literature that male board members may be more fiscally conservative than female board members.<sup>2</sup>

In a 1978 survey of female school board members, Saiter found there was great ambiguity to their support of sex equity in education. Seventy percent of the women surveyed thought schools channeled boys and girls in different directions, and 73 percent thought this was wrong. At the same time only 48 percent supported the Equal Rights Amendment. Sixty-six percent believed that most of the differences between the sexes were culturally induced rather than genetic. However, 78 percent believed that a woman with preschool children should not work outside the home. Fifty-seven percent believed that a woman could be a good mother, a good employee and a good school board member, while 84 percent believed a man could be a good father, a good employee and a good school board member. Forty-six

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<sup>1</sup>Crowley and Johnson, 7.

<sup>2</sup>Konick, Abstract.

percent felt that male board members better understood issues of finance, but 43 percent thought an all-female school board would be just as effective as an all-male school board. Saiter's conclusion was that the female board members she interviewed philosophically supported the basic concepts of feminism, but they were far from being active feminists in their role on the school board.<sup>1</sup> This ambivalence leaves unanswered the impact that the increasing number of women on school boards will have on educational equity issues.

Walker, in a 1982 Missouri study, found female school board members were:

1. More supportive of tuition-free kindergarten in the state of Missouri.
2. More open to cutting athletic budgets.
3. More supportive of music, bands, drama and other arts-related extracurricular activities.
4. More concerned about public relations and parental involvement in the schools.

Male board members were:

1. More supportive of tougher discipline policies.
2. More supportive of suspension as a discipline tool.
3. More supportive of expulsion of chronic absenteeism.

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<sup>1</sup>Susan Saiter, "Women's Lib Among School Board Members: Not Very Militant," Phi Delta Kappan 60, no. 3 (November 1978): 251-52.

4. More supportive of holding students back a year if they are not performing at grade level.
5. More supportive of equal educational opportunity for minority students.<sup>1</sup>

Marshall and Heller looked at the committee membership of male and female board members to determine on what issues they might place emphasis. They found that committee assignments reflected board members' personal experiences. They found that women were most often found on the curriculum, public relations, legislative and policy committees of their school boards, while male board members were more apt to be on the finance, negotiations, and buildings and grounds committees. They also found that men seemed more concerned with efficient execution of administrative tasks while women gave priority to the content and quality of the educational program.<sup>2</sup>

Marshall, in her study of Dupage County, Illinois, school board members, found that female school board members were:

1. More heavily involved in lobbying and legislative issues.
2. More involved in policy development.
3. More involved with the state school board association.

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<sup>1</sup>James Richard Walker, "Characteristics and Perceptions of Male and Female School Board Members in Missouri," DAI 43 (1982): 1787-A.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall and Heller, 31.

4. More interested in curriculum and instruction, school/community relations, and academic achievement.
5. More interested in the evaluation of the superintendent.<sup>1</sup>

The last finding is one which did not come up in the other studies reviewed. It implies that female board members more closely scrutinize superintendents' performance and are more often than men, critical of superintendents' performance.

### Summary of the Literature

The review of literature can be summarized as follows:

1. History of School Boards. States clearly have the responsibility and authority to oversee education. Most states have delegated many of their powers related to education to local school boards, while at the same time establishing minimum standards for operation. In the early days the school board members set school policies and administered the schools. As schools got larger, boards began to limit their role to that of policy making and turned administrative responsibilities over to professional school administrators.

2. The Role of the School Board. The literature agrees that the primary role of the school board is to establish operating policies for all aspects of the school program including curriculum, finance, personnel,

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, 571-75.

instructional materials, public relations and board operations. As they carry out this role, citizens expect board members to uphold community values, conserve public resources and promote individual rights and interests.

3. Qualities of Effective Board Members. There is not total agreement on what makes a good school board member, with different perspectives coming from school board members themselves, school administrators and client citizens. There is general consensus, however, that school board members should be intelligent, honest, persistent, courageous, and empathetic. They must be effective communicators and they must work as a team for the good of the entire community. They must believe in public education, be committed to the democratic process and have the time and energy to devote to board work.

4. Causes of School Board Dysfunction. There are a number of common themes that run through the literature on school board dysfunction. Such dysfunction occurs when school superintendents and school board members disagree as to the nature of their roles, when there is not open communication between administrators, board members and citizens and when the board members or administrators lack the necessary skills. More specific causes of dysfunction are domination of special interests, lack of clearly stated written board policies and operating procedures, cliques on the board, individual rather than team work and over



emphasis on some areas of policy making at the expense of others. One of the most common causes of dysfunction is a lack of agreement between administrators and board members as to where policy making ends and administering begins. There is no clear demarcation line in the literature between these two functions, therefore it is important that board members and the superintendents reach their own local agreement on this issue early in their working relationship.

5. Social Composition of School Boards. Prior to 1910 women had little involvement in the governance of American schools. Between 1910 and 1925 the percentage of women on school boards increased from 3 to 12 percent. Between 1973 and 1986 there was another meteoric rise in female involvement from 12 to 36 percent. Contemporary school board members, regardless of their sex, tend to be well educated, to come from socio-economic upper and upper-middle class, to be married, to be active in the community and to have school-age children. The literature shows three distinct differences in the background of male and female board members. They are:

a. Occupation. The majority of female board members are homemakers while the majority of males worked for a salary outside the home.

b. Organizational Membership. Male board members are involved with professional, business and community service organizations while female board members are

involved in political, social service and school-related organizations.

c. School Contacts. Female board members have more direct contacts with the schools before they come on the board than male board members do. This is because of their greater involvement with school-related organizations such as the P.T.A. as well as their primary parenting role within the family.

6. Motivation for School Board Involvement. Civic duty and a general interest in education are the most common motivations for school board candidacy. There is disagreement in the literature as to whether there is a difference in motivation between male and female board members. Some studies show that women are motivated by gender itself to run for the school board. They feel that the female perspective is needed. Other studies reinforced the idea that women's motivation is more focused on education while men focus more on general community service.

7. Mode of Governance. Female board members tend to communicate more frequently with parent, students, staff and their peers than do male school board members. They are also more apt to visit school facilities or attend school activities. They also are perceived as coming to board meetings better prepared than their male counterparts. There is some evidence that the female board members may take a more activist approach to policy making which is

reflected in more specific and probing questioning at board meetings.

8. Priorities of Board Members. Male board members have historically placed emphasis on finance, transportation, and facilities. Female board members are more apt to emphasize child centered and people issues. Past studies reinforce the idea that women give higher priority to public relations, curriculum and personnel issues.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### Population and Sampling Procedures

The population studied was comprised of all school board members in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) public school districts in the state of Iowa. The school districts were those listed in the Iowa Educational Directory, 1985-86. The sample group included 300 school board members, approximately 12 percent of the total population. One hundred fifty female school board members and 150 male school board members were selected. The 150 female school board members were randomly selected from the total population of female school board members in Iowa. The 150 male school board members were randomly selected from the total population of male school board members in Iowa.

A set of mailing labels for Iowa school board members was requested from the Iowa Association of School Boards. One list of labels included the mailing addresses of all the female school board members in Iowa, while the second list of labels included the mailing addresses of all the male school board members in Iowa. After drawing a number between one and ten to determine where to enter the lists,

the researcher selected approximately every third female board member and every fifteenth male board member for inclusion in this study. The selection process continued until 150 males and 150 females had been chosen.

A letter signed by the researcher, accompanied by the questionnaire, was mailed to all 300 school board members comprising the sample population. They were asked to return the completed questionnaire in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope within two weeks. Return envelopes were coded to allow for follow-up contacts. The questionnaires themselves remained anonymous. A follow-up letter was sent within two weeks to those board members who had not responded. A third follow-up letter was sent to those board members who had not replied after one month.

#### The Instrument

A questionnaire was developed to survey school board members in the sample and is the basis for all of the data collected. The process for its development involved several stages. The initial draft was read by members of the researcher's doctoral committee and changes were made in accordance with their suggestions. The revised second draft was mailed to a group of ten experts including school board members, school administrators and sex-equity consultants. As a result of their suggestions, a third and final draft was developed.

The original draft of the questionnaire was adapted

from a questionnaire used in a related study of school board members in Dupage County, Illinois, by Stephanie Marshall entitled The Profiles, Functions and Roles of School Board Members in Dupage County, Illinois. The questionnaire was adapted by deleting some questions, adding others and rearranging the sequential order of some of the questions based upon the review of related literature. Permission was sought from Dr. Marshall to use adapted portions of her instrument for this study. Her permission was granted.

The questionnaire has four main components. The first component of the questionnaire is designed to determine the motivation for school board candidacy. It also inquires into the sources of support and encouragement school board members received during their candidacy. The purpose of this section of the questionnaire is to determine if the motivation for board candidacy is substantially different for male and female school board members, and if so what implications this may have for educational policy making.

The second component of the questionnaire explores the governance styles of school board members. It consists of eight questions targeted at their perspectives about how board members should operate, their leadership roles on the board, the groups that influence their decision making and their patterns of communication within the community. The purpose of this component is to determine if there is a significant difference in the way male and female school

board members approach their responsibilities.

The third component of the questionnaire consists of thirteen questions and revolves around the priorities of board members. The purpose of this component is to determine if there is any significant difference in the priorities of male and female school board members. The ultimate objective is to determine if the increasing number of women on school boards will lead to a different emphasis in educational policy making.

The fourth and final component consists of fifteen questions designed to obtain background information on participating board members. The purpose is to determine if there are significant differences in the backgrounds and experiences of male and female school board members which might lead to substantially different perspectives and actions while on the school board.

#### Analysis of Data

Each questionnaire was coded, and with the assistance of personnel at the computer center at Drake University, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS<sup>X</sup>) computer program was used to accommodate the statistical needs of the study.

Frequency distributions and percentages were compiled for males and females involved in the study. Chi-square analysis was used on the responses of male and female board members to test the four major hypotheses of this study.

1. There is no difference in the background and experiences of male and female school board members in Iowa.
2. There is no difference in the factors which motivate male and female school board members to seek board membership.
3. There is no difference in the governance styles of male and female school board members in Iowa.
4. There is no difference in the priorities of male and female school board members in Iowa.

Statistical tests resulting in values which could occur by chance less than 5 percent of the time were the basis for rejecting a hypothesis. The breakdown statistical process was used to see if the variables of work status, age and district size impacted on the relationship between male and female responses to the questions asked.



## CHAPTER 4

### Presentation of Data

The following is a presentation of the data obtained from the questionnaire described in Chapter 3. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix of this study. Included in this chapter is an analysis of the data gathered.

The questionnaire was mailed to 300 Iowa school board members who serve on the boards of education of school districts which enroll students from kindergarten through grade twelve. It was mailed to 150 female board members who were randomly selected from the total population of female board members, and to 150 male board members who were randomly selected from the total population of male board members.

The questionnaire was completed and returned by 175 or 58 percent of the board members to whom it was mailed. Ninety-four or 63 percent of the female board members completed and returned the questionnaire. Eighty-one or 53 percent of the male board members completed and returned the questionnaire.

### Background and Experience

There is no significant difference in the ages of the male and female school board members; however, 80.9 percent of the female board members are forty years old or more as compared to 69.1 percent of male board members. Iowa board members are older than the national average. This might be expected given the older profile of Iowa's population compared to many other states. See Table 1.

Table 1  
Age of School Board Members by Sex

	Less Than 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 or Over
Males	5.9%	25.9%	40.7%	22.2%	6.2%
Females	1.1%	18.1%	51.1%	26.6%	3.2%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .3155					
	39 and Under			40 and Over	
Males	30.9%			69.1%	
Females	19.1%			80.9%	
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .1055					

The trend toward female board members being older than male board members was more evident in smaller school

districts. It almost totally disappeared in larger school districts.

There was no significant difference in the educational levels of male and female board members within the total sample population. Approximately 75 percent of both male and female school board members have completed some post-secondary studies. This finding is consistent with those of related studies in other parts of the country that show that school board members are relatively well educated. See Table 2.

Table 2  
Education Level of Board Members by Sex

	High School	Some College	Bachelors Degree	Graduate Degree
Males	27.2%	25.9%	25.9%	21.0%
Females	22.3%	26.6%	26.6%	24.5%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .8833				

There was a significant difference in the marital status of male and female school board members in the study (Table 3). Although as a total group the vast majority of the respondents were married, 11.7 percent of the females reported being either single, widowed or divorced. Only one or 1.2 percent of the male board members

Table 3  
Marital Status of School Board Members  
by Sex and Size of District

	Single/Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
Males	1.2%	98.8%	0	0
Females	1.1%	88.3%	4.3%	6.4%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0275				

	Single, Widowed, Divorced	Married
<u>All School Districts</u>		
Males	1.2%	98.8%
Females	11.7%	88.3%

Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0150

Districts Under 800 Enrollment

Males	1.8%	98.2%
Females	4.3%	95.7%

Chi-Square Level of Probability = .8652

Districts Over 800 Enrollment

Males	0	100.0%
Females	19.1%	80.9%

Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0691

reported their marital status falling into those categories. The single male school board member in Iowa is a rare species. Most of the single females were found in larger school districts.

The trend in family income of Iowa board members tends to mirror the national trend which shows board members to be heavily entrenched in the middle class with some touches of affluence. There is no significant difference in the family incomes of male and female board members. However, there is a higher frequency of female board members than male school board members in the \$50,000 and up income category. See Table 4.

Table 4  
Family Income of Board Members by Sex

	Less Than \$30,000	\$30,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 and Above
Males	32.1%	43.6%	24.4%
Females	31.5%	33.7%	34.8%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .2744			

There is a significant difference in the employment status of male and female school board members. Thirty-three percent of the female board members stated they were full-time homemakers as opposed to no males who categorized

themselves as homemakers. None of the males were working part time, but 20.2 percent of the females listed they were part-time employees. More males reported being full-time employees and being self-employed.

The percentage of females who are homemakers (33 percent) is somewhat lower than the percentage reported in related studies in other parts of the country. This means that over 60 percent of the female board members were either employed (full time or part time), self-employed or actively seeking employment. The high level of self-employment can probably be explained by Iowa's rural nature and the strong involvement of farmers on school boards as well as the heavy preponderance of small businesses in the state. See Table 5.

Table 5

Employment Status of Board Members by Sex

	Unemployed	Part Time	Full Time	Self-Employed	Retired	Homemaker
Males	2.5%	0	33.3%	60.5%	3.7%	0
Females	4.3%	20.2%	19.1%	19.1%	4.3%	33.0%
Chi-Square Level of Significance = .0001						

There was also a distinct difference in the vocations of male and female school board members. It has already been mentioned that 33 percent of the female board members were homemakers as opposed to none of the males. In addition, 38 percent of the males listed their occupation as farming, while only 8.5 percent of the females were farmers. Female board members were more apt to have formal training in the field of education and to come from professional backgrounds in general (i.e., doctor, nurse, dentist, lawyer, social worker, engineer). Eleven percent of male board members were craftpersons or blue-collar workers. No females classified themselves as such. Nine percent of female board members stated they were secretaries and clerical workers. No males were in this vocational area.

There was only one vocational cluster where the representation of male and female board members was similar. That was in the cluster that included sales, insurance, banking, accounting and bookkeeping. Eighteen percent of the males were employed in this area as opposed to 17 percent of the females. See Table 6.

Table 6  
Vocations of Board Members by Sex

Vocation	Males	Females
Homemaking	0	31%
Farming and Agribusiness	38%	8%
Education	6%	18%
Craftspersons and Blue Collar Workers	11%	0
Secretarial and Clerical Workers	0	9%
Professionals Other Than Education	9%	17%
Banking, Sales, Insurance, Accounting and Bookkeeping	18%	17%
Other	11%	10%

Chi-Square Level of Significance = .0001

There was no significant difference in the general parental status of male and female school board members. Ninety-eight percent of the male board members were parents as were 96.8 percent of female board members. However, one significant difference did show up. Forty-three percent of male board members had children enrolled in elementary school as opposed to 21.5 percent of the female board members. There was no difference in the parental status of board members when children in middle school, junior high school or high school were reviewed.



The trend in number of children in elementary school may be affected by a tendency of women to postpone their school board candidacy until their children have grown older. This may also account for the trend in higher age levels for female than for male board members. See Table 7.

There is a significant difference in the student enrollments of the districts of male and female board members. A higher percentage of female board members represent districts of 800 students or more (50 percent) than male board members (27.9 percent). This statistic is consistent with national studies showing more female representation on school boards in urban than rural environments. The large number of rural, small school districts in Iowa may also then explain why Iowa lags behind the national average for percentage of females on school boards. See Table 8.

Table 7

Parental Status and Number of Children in Different  
Levels of Education of School Board Members by Sex

	No Children	1-2 Children	3-4 Children	4 or More Children
<u>Children in All Levels of Education</u>				
Males	1.2%	27.1%	48.1%	23.5%
Females	3.2%	34.1%	47.9%	15.0%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .2606				
	No Children	1 Child	2 or More Children	
<u>Children in Elementary School</u>				
Males	57.0%	29.1%	14.0%	
Females	78.5%	15.1%	6.5%	
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0221				
<u>Children in Middle/Junior High School</u>				
Males	57.0%	38.0%	5.1%	
Females	61.3%	32.3%	6.5%	
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .7129				
<u>Children in High School</u>				
Males	58.2%	32.9%	8.9%	
Females	58.1%	30.1%	11.8%	
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .6913				

Table 8  
District Enrollment by Sex of Board Members

	0-399 Students	400-799 Students	800-1499 Students	1500 and More Students
Males	27.8%	44.3%	15.2%	12.7%
Females	19.1%	30.9%	22.3%	27.7%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0256				

There is no significant difference in the tenure of males and females on school boards. An interesting statistic is that 36.9 percent of the male board members and 35.3 percent of the female board members in this study have been on the board seven years or longer. There is not a rapid turnover in membership on Iowa school boards. See Table 9.

Table 9  
Board Tenure by Sex of Board Members

	3 Years or Less	4-6 Years	7 or More Years
Males	24.6%	35.8%	36.9%
Females	37.2%	27.7%	35.3%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .3264			

There is no significant difference in the political affiliation of male and female school board members. There is, however, a higher number of female board members who consider themselves to be Democrats. See Table 10.

Table 10  
Political Affiliation by Sex of Board Members

	Independent	Republican	Democrat
Males	33.3%	46.2%	19.2%
Females	28.0%	39.8%	31.2%

Chi-Square Level of Probability = .2681

There are four areas where the pattern of organizational membership before school board candidacy is significantly different for males and females. Iowa board women come on school boards having significantly more involvement with school and youth organizations than do Iowa board men. This finding is consistent with similar studies in other parts of the country. They also had greater involvement on school advisory committees. In addition, women were significantly more involved with social and recreational organizations than were their male school board counterparts.

The one area where male school board members had a significantly higher membership rate was in professional and business organizations. This finding is not surprising given that almost all the male board members worked outside their homes while only 66 percent of female board members did so.

Although the differences were not significant, women were more apt to be members of political organizations. Males were more frequently members of municipal, county and state commissions and boards. There was no difference in the involvement of males and females in general service organizations, church organizations, university and alumni organizations or civil rights organizations. See Table 11.

There is no significant difference in the organizational leadership experience of male and female school board members. However, women are more apt to hold leadership offices in organizations to which they were a member. Forty-six percent of the female board members hold leadership offices in three or more organizations as opposed to 31.7 percent of the men. Twenty-five percent of the male board members stated they had never held leadership offices in the organizations they belonged to as opposed to 20.2 percent of the females who made the same statement. See Table 12.

Table 11

Organization Membership Before School Board Candidacy  
by Sex of School Board Members

Organizations	Males	Females	Chi-Square Probability
School or Youth	48.1%	78.7%	.0001
School Advisory Committees	11.4%	37.2%	.0002
Recreational and Social	31.6%	51.1%	.0155
Professional and Business	54.5%	35.1%	.0165
Government Boards	30.4%	19.1%	.1240
Political Groups	31.6%	43.6%	.1450
Civil Rights	1.3%	4.3%	.4755
Church	68.4%	75.5%	.5002
General Service	43.0%	48.9%	.5339
University and Alumni	27.8%	28.7%	1.000

Table 12

Leadership Experience in Organizations by Sex of  
School Board Members

	No Organizations	1-2 Organizations	3 or More Organizations
Males	25.3%	45.0%	31.7%
Females	20.0%	40.0%	46.0%

Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0727

Motivation for Seeking School Board Membership

School board members were asked to rank the top four factors that motivated them to seek school board candidacy. They selected from a list of sixteen motivating factors identified in prior school board studies. See Table 13.

Table 13

Motivation for Seeking School Board Membership  
by Sex of Board Members

Organizations	Ranked in Males	Top Four Females	Chi-Square Probability
Representation of Group	3.7%	27.7%	.0001
My Children	44.4%	24.5%	.0086
EEO Concerns	4.9%	16.0%	.0364
Board Performance	18.5%	9.6%	.1350
School Closings	17.3%	9.6%	.2003
School/Community Relations	35.8%	43.6%	.3695
Budget Issues	22.3%	15.9%	.3883
Curriculum Issues	43.2%	48.9%	.5449
Administrators' Performance	4.9%	7.4%	.7118
Student Achievement	23.5%	20.2%	.7375
Duty to Community	56.8%	53.2%	.7454
Superintendent's Performance	9.9%	7.4%	.7629
Politics	4.9%	3.2%	.8406
Teachers' Performance	4.9%	4.3%	1.000
Interest in Schools	81.5%	81.9%	1.000
Student Discipline	3.7%	3.2%	1.000

There is a significant difference in the importance assigned by male and female school board members to three factors that motivated their candidacy. Sixteen percent of the females as opposed to 4.9 percent of the males ranked concern for equal educational opportunity and civil rights issues as one of the four most important reasons for seeking their school board candidacy. In a closely related area, 27.7 percent of the females ranked the desire to represent an under-represented group on the board in their top four motivations as opposed to just 3.7 percent of the males who did so.

There is one other significant difference in the motivating factors for male and female school board members. Forty-four percent of the males as opposed to 24.5 percent of the females, listed the desire to improve their own children's education as one of the four leading reasons they sought school board candidacy.

There were two areas where the difference in the factors motivating males and females was not significant, but where trends were different enough to merit attention. Male school board members were more apt to list school closing issues and concern for current school board performance as one of the top four factors which motivated them to run for the school board. There was no difference between the motivation of males and females in the remaining factors tested.



The previous findings identify the innate motivating factors for the school board members' candidacy. However, sometimes innate motivation is not enough and encouragement from others is necessary to inspire persons to run for the school board. For this reason the participants in this study were asked to rank the four groups of list persons who provided the greatest encouragement for their school board candidacy. The findings are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Groups Who Encouraged Board Candidacy by Sex  
of Board Members

Groups	Ranked in Top Four Males	Ranked in Top Four Females	Chi-Square Probability
School Groups	17.3%	36.2%	.0087
Business Groups	32.1%	16.0%	.0302
School Administrators	40.7%	27.7%	.0959
School Board Members	79.0%	67.0%	.2561
Teachers' Association	17.3%	25.5%	.2561
Family Members	63.0%	69.1%	.4822
Friends and Neighbors	86.4%	89.4%	.7159
Community Groups	6.2%	4.3%	.8185
Political Groups	3.7%	2.1%	.8658
Civil Rights Groups	0	0	--

There are two groups that give significantly different levels of support to the board candidacy of males and females. Thirty-six percent of the female board members stated they were encouraged by school organizations, as opposed to 17.3 percent of the male board members who said they were encouraged by school organizations. This finding is consistent with the earlier finding that female board members were more apt to be members of school-related organizations before their board candidacy.

On the other hand, 32.1 percent of the male school board members stated they received encouragement from the business community for their candidacy while only 16 percent of the female board members reported such encouragement. This finding is again consistent with the earlier finding that males were more apt to be members of those same business and professional organizations before they became board members.

Although the differences were not significant, male board members were more apt to get encouragement from the school administration and from current school board members for their candidacy than were female school board members. Female board members were more apt to get encouragement for their candidacy from teachers and teacher associations.

The ultimate form of encouragement for a school board candidacy is a public, formal endorsement from a group or organization. Participants were asked if their candidacy

had been endorsed by any group or organization. Nineteen percent of the male candidates stated they had received one or more formal endorsements as opposed to 14.9 percent of the female candidates. This difference was not statistically significant, however it does hint at greater institutional support for male than for female board candidates. These figures also show that it is not common practice in many Iowa communities to formally endorse school board candidacies. This is especially true in smaller communities. Most of the formal endorsements occurred in middle-sized and larger school districts. See Table 15.

Table 15

## Official Endorsement of Candidacy by Sex of Board Members

	Received Endorsement	No Endorsement
Males	19.8%	80.2%
Females	14.9%	85.1%

Chi-Square Level of Significance = .5161

Where endorsements were given, however, there were some noticeable trends that proved to be interesting. The local teacher's association is the group that most frequently endorses school board candidacies. Teacher associations are more apt to endorse the candidacies of female candidates

than the candidacies of males. Organizations that endorsed female candidates that did not show up on the male endorsement list were the Women's Political Caucus, the Federated Women's Club, the American Association of University Women and School Improvement Groups. **Groups** who endorsed male candidacies but which did not show up on the female endorsement lists were County Tax Associations, Boards of Realtors, Athletic Booster Clubs, Private School Parents and Keep Our Schools Open Groups. Local newspapers and parent-teacher associations were equitably listed by male and female board members as endorsers of their candidacies.

### Governance Styles

The third objective of this study was to determine if there were differences in the way male and female board members approach their task of school governance. Board members were asked which of the following points of view was closest to their own:

1. Board members should do what the majority of their constituents think they should do even if it is not what they personally think is best.
2. Board members should follow their own judgment regardless of what the majority of their constituents think they should do.

There was no significant difference between male and female board members' responses to these questions. However female board members, more often than males, stated that they should represent the majority of their constituency

rather than following their own judgment. A majority of both males and females stated they should follow their own judgment. There is some evidence that female board members may be more sensitive to the views and feelings of their constituents whereas male board members may give more weight to their own judgment. See Table 16.

Table 16

Majority Rule Versus Own Judgment Governance Styles  
by Sex of Board Members

	Majority Rule	Own Judgment
Males	28.8%	71.5%
Females	37.2%	62.8%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .3069		

Board members were also asked which of the following more closely reflected their point of view:

1. A school board should be like a legislative body. (It acts to create the best policies, through open debate. It watches vigilantly the implementation of its policies. Each school board member acts as a representative or "ombudsman" for a constituency, but works toward consensus on what is best for the entire community.)
2. A school board should be like a corporate board of trustees. (It acts to set general goals. It periodically reviews with administration the status of the institution. Its members generally act as a team to support the work of the organization.)

There was no significant difference between the responses of female and male board members to this question. Again, however, more female boardmembers thought the school board should operate as a legislative body than did male board members.

Women were more apt to associate themselves with the concepts of open debate, vigilance and representation of a constituency and a more active board role in general. Males were more apt to associate themselves with the concepts of goal setting, periodic review of agency status and support, and a slightly more passive approach to board governance. However, a majority of both males and females stated that the legislative philosophy was nearest their own. See Table 17.

Table 17

Legislative Body Versus Corporate Board Theory  
by Sex of School Board Members

	Legislative Body	Corporate Board
Males	57.0%	41.8%
Females	65.9%	34.1%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .3057		

Male board members served significantly more time as board president than did female board members. This is despite the fact that females had held leadership positions more often in outside organizations. Since on most boards in Iowa males still constitute the majority, it would appear that male board members are still reluctant to vote leadership reins to a woman, or that female board members are reluctant to seek leadership positions. See Table 18.

Table 18

Years as Board President by Sex of Board Members

	0 Years	1-3 Years	4 or More Years
Males	53.1%	33.4%	13.5%
Females	67.0%	27.5%	5.4%

Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0479

When the same question was asked about the vice presidency, the same trends between the sexes were apparent although the difference was not as significant as it was with the presidency. Female board members were more apt to have been vice president of the board for four or more years than they were to have been president for the same period of time. See Table 19.

Table 19  
Years as Vice President by Sex of Board Members

	0 Years as Vice President	1-3 Years as Vice President	4 or More Years as Vice President
Males	56.8%	42.0%	1.2%
Females	66.0%	28.8%	5.4%
Chi-Square Level of Probability = .0512			

Board members were asked to rank order the four groups which have the most influence on their decision making. There was only one group where there was a significant difference in the responses of male and female school board members. Seventy-one percent of the male school board members ranked other board members in their district among the top four groups that influenced their decision making as opposed to only 52.7 percent of the females. There are interesting implications in this finding. It appears that male board members are swayed by their peers on the board more than female board members and may be more apt to vote with them on more issues. This may be a direct result of the fact that males make up the majority on most Iowa school boards. Female board members appear to value unanimous votes less than their peers. The unique perspectives and experiences females bring to the board seem to result in a



more independent voting profile.

When looking at the rest of the groups, male and female board members seemed to be influenced similarly. Male board members ranked the following four groups as the ones which most influenced their decision making: (1) district administration, 91.3 percent; (2) school board members in their own district, 71.3 percent; (3) parents and parent groups, 51.3 percent; and (4) student groups/teachers associations and teachers/advisory committees (all), 28.8 percent. Female board members ranked the following groups as the ones that most influenced their decision making: (1) district administration, 90.3 percent; (2) parents and parent groups, 57 percent; (3) school board members in my district, 52.7 percent; and (4) advisory committees, 35.5 percent.

The school administrators were far and away the group that influenced board member decision making the most. Female board members seemed to give a little more attention to parental concerns and advisory committee recommendations than male school board members. See Table 20.

Table 20  
Groups that Influence Decision Making by  
Sex of Board Members

Group	Ranked in Males	Top Four Females	Chi-Square Probability
School Board Members (District)	71.3%	52.7%	.0192
Community Groups	8.8%	4.4%	.3771
Advisory Committees	28.8%	35.5%	.4349
Family and Relatives	6.3%	10.8%	.4363
Students	28.8%	24.7%	.4521
Teachers	28.8%	34.4%	.4535
Parents	51.3%	57.0%	.5468
School Organizations	10.0%	14.0%	.5718
Business Community	6.3%	8.6%	.7673
School Board Association	13.8%	16.1%	.8234
Church Groups	1.3%	0	.9398
District Administration	91.3%	90.3%	1.000
School Board Members (Other)	7.5%	7.5%	1.000
Civil Rights Groups	0	1.1%	1.000
Political Parties (Groups)	0	0	1.000

School board members were asked about their communications related to school board business to determine if there were any different patterns for male and female

board members. Board members were asked to estimate the number of meetings, discussions or phone calls they had per month with various groups in the community.

There was one group where there was a significant difference in the responses of male and female board members. Female board members reported more contacts with parents than male board members. It is not clear from the data whether this occurs because parents view female board members as being more responsive, or because female board members affirmatively initiate these contacts.

Several female board members stated in their general comments that parents feel more comfortable coming to them about concerns than coming to their male counterparts. Male board members, on the other hand, stated that female board members spend too much time listening to petty gripes from the community and parents.

There were two other groups with whom the communication patterns of male and female school board members were not significantly different but where frequency of contact was different enough to deserve attention. Male board members communicate more often with their peers on the school board than female board members. This may be a sign that there is a closer camaraderie among males on the school board. This might be expected since they usually constitute the majority on school boards. A number of female board members complained that male board members did not listen to them,

or that they had informal discussions about school issues in which the women were not included.

Female board members more frequently communicate with students than do their male counterparts. This reinforces findings in other studies that female board members show more interest in student-centered concerns, as opposed to male board members who show more concern with budget, buildings and buses.

There was no significant difference in the frequency of communications reported by male and female board members with the superintendent, principals, teacher, or legislators. The four groups with which board members reported having the most frequent communications, regardless of their sex, were: (1) the superintendent, (2) their peers on the school board, (3) parents, and (4) teachers. This accents the degree to which board members rely on their superintendent for information and advice. It also accents the importance of hiring a capable superintendent.

One other interesting finding was that board members who were homemakers did not report having more communications with these persons and groups than did their counterparts who worked outside the home. **Therefore the** differences between male and female board members cannot be attributed in this instance to their employment status. See Table 21.

Table 21

Meetings, Discussions and Phone Calls per Month by Sex of School Board Members

Groups	No Talks		1-3 Talks		4 or More Talks		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Parents	12.7%	8.7%	64.6%	52.2%	22.8%	39.1%	.0334
School Board Members (District)	1.3%	10.6%	59.0%	56.4%	39.7%	33.0%	.0806
Students	46.8%	34.9%	44.3%	52.3%	8.9%	12.8%	.1472
Teachers/Employees	14.1%	19.4%	65.4%	52.7%	20.5%	28.0%	.3431
Principals	16.5%	20.7%	69.6%	68.5%	13.9%	9.8%	.4660
Legislators	57.7%	60.9%	39.7%	38.0%	2.6%	1.1%	.7316
Superintendent	0	1.1%	48.8%	51.6%	51.3%	52.7%	.7367
School Board Members (Other)	46.8%	46.7%	50.6%	52.2%	2.6%	1.1%	.7671

Board members were asked to estimate the number of times each month that they attended school-related meetings and events, or visited school facilities. There was no significant difference between male and female board members in this area of boardsmanship. Attendance at official board meetings was not included.

There were two areas where the frequency difference between males and females merits comment. Female board members reported that they attend school-related events and extracurricular activities more than do male board members. Seventy-three percent of the female board members stated that they attended five or more school events each month, as opposed to 59.5 percent of the male board members who reported this frequency of attendance. Females also made more general visits to buildings and classrooms.

Seventy-seven percent of the female board members who were homemakers reported attending five or more school events each month, while 70 percent of female board members who worked outside the home reported the same frequency of attendance. Employment status does not appear to be a factor in the differences reported by males and females in this area.

There is no difference in the frequency with which male and female school board members attended school board committee meetings, inservice activities and Iowa Association of School Boards events. It is clear from the

results of this study that Iowa school boards do not use subcommittees very often and that board members are not significantly involved in inservice activities or school board association activities. Administrators often attend school board association workshops and meetings with one or no school board members accompanying them. See Table 22.

Table 22

Visitations or Attendance per Month by Sex of Board Members

Event	0-2 Times		3+ Times		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
School-Related Events	40.5%	26.9*	59.5%	73.1%	.0838
I.A.S.B. Meetings	96.1%	97.9%	3.9%	2.2%	.3191
School Visits	77.9%	70.0%	22.1%	29.8%	.3348
Inservice Sessions	97.4%	100.0%	2.6%	0	.4096
Board Committee Meetings	84.8%	80.2%	15.2%	18.7%	.5277

There was a significant difference in the time male and female school board members spent reading educational articles and journals to keep abreast of educational issues and research. Twenty-three percent of the female board members reported spending six or more hours a month on this task as opposed to 10.1 percent of the males. On the other end of the spectrum, 44.7 percent of the female board members reported spending less than two hours reading

educational literature while 58.2 percent of the males put in so little time. Although there was not a significant difference in the time male and female board members spend reviewing educational legislation, female board members reported spending more time on such review than did male board members.

There was no significant difference in the amount of time male and female board members reported spending in preparing for board meetings. However, in the general comments of both male and female board members there was a perception that female board members came to board meetings better prepared than their male counterparts. It could be that the additional time females spend reading educational literature and reviewing legislation, along with the more direct interaction with schools they bring to the board, leads to the perception that they are better prepared for board meetings. See Table 23.

Participants were asked to list their sources of information on common issues that come before the school board. The sources fit into the following three categories: (1) personal experience, friends and community, (2) school board members and the school board association; and (3) administrators and staff. See Table 24.

There were two subjects upon which sources of information were significantly different for male and female school board members. The first was on the subject of



Table 23

Hours per Month Spent Reading, Studying and Preparing by Sex of Board Members

Activity	0-2 Hours		3-5 Hours		6+ Hours		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Reading Educational Articles	58.2%	44.7%	31.6%	33.0%	10.1%	22.3%	.0322
Reviewing Legislation	61.3%	50.0%	35.0%	38.3%	3.8%	11.7%	.1005
Preparation for Board Meeting	33.8%	34.0%	41.3%	46.8%	25.0%	19.2%	.7346

Table 24

## Sources of Information by Sex of School Board Members

Topic	Experience and Community		School Board Members and Association		Administration and Staff		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Buildings, Grounds and Transportation	22.1%	5.6%	11.7%	11.2%	66.2%	83.1%	.0067
Special Needs Programs	2.6%	12.4%	5.3%	7.9%	92.1%	79.8%	.0481
Current Legislation	5.1%	14.4%	69.2%	68.9%	25.6%	15.6%	*.0877
School Finance and Budget	10.5%	4.4%	11.8%	5.6%	77.6%	90.0%	*.0913
Trends in Curriculum	5.2%	11.0%	48.1%	35.2%	46.8%	53.8%	*.1510
Contract Negotiations	14.3%	5.7%	18.2%	18.2%	67.5%	76.1%	*.1689
Board/Superintendent Relations	26.3%	30.3%	40.8%	48.3%	32.9%	21.3%	.2466
Curriculum Development	2.6%	7.9%	14.3%	10.1%	83.1%	82.0%	.2572
School/Community Relations	53.8%	64.4%	21.8%	13.3%	24.4%	22.2%	.2720
School Board Procedures	25.0%	16.3%	38.8%	47.8%	36.3%	35.9%	.3012
Hiring and Evaluating Superintendent	24.2%	24.4%	62.8%	68.9%	12.8%	5.6%	.3118
Hiring and Evaluating Staff	11.5%	10.1%	10.3%	14.6%	78.2%	75.3%	.6871
Policy and Procedures	15.6%	11.2%	29.9%	32.6%	54.5%	56.2%	.7026
Civil Rights	18.7%	18.9%	30.7%	35.6%	50.7%	45.6%	.7720

programs for special groups of students such as the handicapped or the socio-economically disadvantaged. Twelve percent of the female board members, as opposed to 2.6 percent of their male colleagues, stated that their primary source of information about these programs was personal experience and the community. Male board members were more dependent upon administration and staff for information about those programs. The second area of significant difference was on the subject of buildings, grounds and transportation. Twenty-two percent of the male board members said they relied on their personal experience or community sources as opposed to just 5.6 percent of their female colleagues who said they relied on the same source. Female board members were more apt to depend on the administration and staff for information in this area.

There were several areas where the differences in sources for information of female and male board members did not reach significant, but where the frequency and percentages were different enough to suggest trends. Female board members were more reliant on personal experience, knowledge and the community for their information about legislative issues, curriculum issues and public relations issues. They seemed to have greater confidence in their innate instincts in these areas and relied less on information from other sources than did male board members.

Male board members on the other hand were more reliant

on personal knowledge and experience when it came to school finance and budget, collective bargaining and contract negotiations. They were less reliant on information from the administration and staff in this area. These findings are similar to findings in other sex-based studies of school boards and consistent with traditional sex role stereotypes of men and women. In reviewing the data on sources of information, there was some indication that female board members are generally less apt to rely on school administrators and staff for information than were male board members.

Board members were asked to give their own perception of their greatest strength as a board member and also their greatest weakness as a board member. The ten most common strengths perceived by male and female board members are shown in Table 25. The total list of perceived strengths and weaknesses is found in the Appendix.

There are two strengths which are high on both the male and female list of perceived strengths. The ability to listen, to be objective and open minded was the most commonly perceived strength of both male and female board members. Direct experience in education was third on the male list while teaching experience was second on the female list. Although experience as an educator was high on both lists, three times as many females as males listed this as a strength in their boardmanship. This is compatible with the

Table 25

## Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Strengths by Sex of Board Members

Males	Females
1. Listening, objectiveness and open minded	1. Listening, objectiveness and open minded
2. Fairness	2. Teaching experience
3. Direct experience with education	3. Communications with public
4. Common sense	4. Decision making
5. Organizational skills and leadership	5. Parent/student advocacy
6. Personal experience	6. Curriculum expertise
7. Work well with others	7. Prepare well for meetings
8. Independence from any group	8. Advocate for quality education
9. Active in school activities	9. Female point of view
10. Ability to compromise	10. Problem solving, speaking out and asking questions

findings in section one of this study which showed that many more female board members were professional educators than were male board members.

Beyond those two items, the male and female lists of perceived strengths differed substantially. Male board members referred to more general strengths such as fairness, common sense, leadership skills and working well with others. Females perceived their strengths in more specific terms. Public relations, decision making and problem solving were included strengths. They perceived themselves as being active advocates for students and parents, knowledgeable about curriculum, and well prepared for board meetings. In some instances they even listed their female perspective as a strength, something no male board member did in behalf of his perspective.

Male board members listed lack of time for their board activities as their most common weakness. Poor speaking skills and inability to articulate ideas was a close second. There were a number of related weaknesses which came next such as impatience with protocol, intolerance of other opinions and talking too much. Poor communications with the public and lack of compassion completed the list.

Female board members almost unanimously listed lack of understanding of budget and finance as their most commonly perceived weakness. A distant second was lack of time for board activities which showed up first on the males' list.

The percentage of females who listed lack of time as a weakness was much less than the percentage of males. There were three related weaknesses that appeared in the middle of the female list. They were lack of assertiveness, dislike of conflict, and wanting to please everyone. See Table 26.

It is interesting to note that many of the weaknesses that male and female board members perceive themselves having are opposites. Males seem to feel they are too impatient, too intolerant, too opinionated and they talk too much. Females seem to think they are too tolerant, not outspoken enough, and that they sacrifice board effectiveness in order to avoid conflict. If these self-perceptions are accurate, it is clear that men and women bring very different strengths and weaknesses to Iowa's school boards.

#### Priorities of School Board Members

In this component of the study the intent was to determine where board members channelled their time and energy devoted to board work, and more specifically, if male and female school board members pursued different areas of interest while on the board. These findings provide some answers to the question of what impact growing numbers of female board members will have on school board activities.

Board members were asked to rank the four areas of school board responsibilities they wanted to work with the most when they became a board member. They were also asked

Table 26

## Board Members' Perceptions of Their Own Weakness by Sex of Board Members

Males	Females
1. Not enough time to devote to board work	1. Lack understanding of finance and budget
2. Poor at speaking and expressing myself	2. Not enough time to give to board work
3. Impatience	3. Not assertive enough
4. Intolerance of others' opinions	4. Dislike disagreement and conflict
5. Too subjective and opinionated	5. Intolerance of weak board members
6. Talk too much	6. Lack knowledge of legislation
7. Dislike for educational meetings	7. Wanting to please everyone
8. Lack understanding of finance and budget	8. Poor at expressing myself
9. Communication with public	9. Poor public relations
10. Lack of compassion	10. Knowledge of buildings, grounds and transportation



to rank the four areas of school board responsibilities they actually worked on the most upon becoming board members. The intent of this question was to ascertain what board members wanted to work on and the degree to which they were able to translate those wants into reality. It also helped to determine the impact of the realities of board politics and school board acculturation on new board members. The results are shown in Tables 27 and 28.

There were four areas of board responsibilities where there was a significant difference in the desire of male and female board members to be involved. They were finance; curriculum; buildings, grounds and transportation; and policy review and revision. Male board members showed a far greater interest in working on budget and finance, as well as issues related to buildings, grounds and transportation. Female board members showed greater interest in working on curriculum and instruction as well as developing educational policies.

These findings are not too surprising in that they correspond with the findings of several other studies of male and female school board members in other parts of the country. They also reinforce traditional societal stereotypes of men and women, and are consistent with other findings already stated in this study. Male board members, who are more apt to come out of business or agricultural experiences, seem more interested in budget, monetary issues

Table 27

Areas of Responsibility Board Members Wanted to Work  
on by Sex of Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Ranked in Top Four Males	Ranked in Top Four Females	Chi-Square Probability
Budget/Finance	53.1%	19.4%	.0001
Curriculum and Instruction	54.3%	79.6%	.0007
Educational Policies	39.5%	60.5%	.0029
Buildings, Grounds and Transportation	25.9%	8.6%	.0043
Contract Negotiations	18.5%	8.6%	.0887
Student Achievement	37.0%	50.5%	.1020
Board/Superintendent Relations	32.1%	22.6%	.2152
Activities and Athletics	27.7%	34.4%	.3862
Educational Equity	7.4%	11.8%	.4693
Hiring/Evaluating Superintendent	18.5%	21.5%	.5074
School/Community Relations	55.6%	57.0%	.5587
Student Discipline	14.8%	12.9%	.8852
Legislation and Lobbying	9.9%	9.7%	1.000

Table 28  
Areas of Responsibility Actually Worked on  
by Sex of Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Ranked in Top Four Males	Ranked in Top Four Females	Chi-Square Probability
Policy Development	19.8%	41.9%	.0029
Budget/Finance	64.2%	48.4%	.0522
School/Community Relations	50.6%	38.7%	.1543
Activities and Athletics	29.6%	19.4%	.1608
Buildings, Grounds and Transportation	45.7%	35.5%	.2251
Student Achievement	14.8%	21.5%	.3471
Hiring/Evaluating Superintendent	21.0%	28.0%	.3751
Legislation and Lobbying	13.6%	19.4%	.4147
Curriculum and Instruction	46.9%	53.8%	.4536
Student Discipline	9.9%	14.0%	.5517
Board/Superintendent Relations	30.9%	28.0%	.8000
Contract Negotiations	39.5%	36.6%	.8080
Educational Equity	8.6%	10.6%	.8323

and tangible things (buildings, grounds, buses). Female board members, who come from more family, education, and public service oriented backgrounds, show more interest in student-centered and academic programs.

The finding that females show a greater interest in being involved in policy making is an interesting one. It may suggest that women assign greater value to working from written board policies which are periodically revised and updated, whereas males may be more comfortable operating without written board policies. This is important in that policy development is one of the primary board responsibilities.

There were three areas of responsibility in which male and female interest was not significantly different, but in which interest levels differed enough to deserve comment. They were student achievement, contract negotiations (collective bargaining) and board/superintendent relations. Female board members more frequently listed student achievement as an area they would like to get involved in while male board members were more interested in contract negotiations and board/superintendent relations. Again it should be noted that student achievement is closely linked to students and the academic program while contract negotiations heavily center on monetary issues and budget.

The finding that male board members showed more interest in board/superintendent relations merits some

attention. There was another related area of responsibility (hiring and evaluating the superintendent) where the interest level was not significantly different, but where females showed more interest than men. There is some indication in these findings that men may value cordial board/superintendent relations more highly than women and that the female emphasis may be more toward superintendent accountability. Taking this one step further, one might infer that female board members value program quality to the extent that they are more apt to tolerate board/superintendent tension to achieve it. Male board members on the other hand may feel that cordial superintendent/board relations are more important than program accountability. It also could mean that school superintendents, who are primarily male, may have interests which are more compatible with those of their male board members than with those of their female board members.

In comparing Tables 27 and 28, it is clear to see that the realities of school board membership tend to mute the differences in male/female interests that is evident when they came on the school board. When asked to rank the four areas of responsibility they actually spent the most time on, the differences between male and female board members still existed but they lessened in most areas to the point they did not meet the .05 level of probability required for significant difference (Table 28).

The one area of responsibility where the time spent by male and female board members was significantly different was the development of board policies. Forty-two percent of the female board members ranked this among the four areas of responsibility on which they spent the most time as opposed to only 19.8 percent of the male board members.

There were areas of responsibility where the time spent by males and females did not differ significantly, but where there were differences that suggest trends. Male board members spent considerably more time on finance and budget issues as well as buildings, grounds and transportation. This carried over from their greater interest in these areas. Males also spent more time on school/community relations, athletics and extracurricular activities. These latter two findings are interesting in that male board members actually expressed less interest in working on these areas than female board members when they came on the school board. It could be conjectured on the basis of the general comments of board members that athletic issues may have dominated the board's involvement with extracurricular activities and male board members spent more time on this issue. The finding that male board members felt they spent more time on board/community relations is somewhat inconsistent with trends that show up in other related studies as well as other components of this study. There is no obvious explanation for this inconsistency. The greater

female interest in curriculum, student achievement and superintendent evaluation is reflected in the rankings, but not to the degree that might be expected.

Male board members most consistently ranked the following areas of responsibility as the four on which they spent the most time: (1) budget and finance, 64.2 percent; (2) school/community relations, 50.6 percent; (3) curriculum and instruction, 46.9 percent; and (4) buildings, grounds and transportation, 45.7 percent. Female board members most consistently ranked the following four areas of responsibility as the ones on which they spent the most time: (1) curriculum and instruction, 53.8 percent; (2) budget and finance, 48.4 percent; (3) policy development, 41.9 percent; and (4) school/community relations, 38.7 percent.

Respondents were asked about their board committee membership as another avenue for getting at the nature of their priorities as board members. There was one committee where there was a statistically significant difference in male and female membership rates. Twenty-nine percent of the males had served on the finance/budget committee during their tenure on the school board. **Nine percent of the** female board members had served on the finance subcommittee.

There were four committees where there was no significant difference between male and female membership patterns, but where male/female membership rates differed

enough to mention. The female rate of membership on legislative lobbying committees was twice that of their male counterparts. Females were more frequently members of curriculum committees as well. On the other hand, male board members were more frequently members of buildings/grounds/transportation committees and public relations committees. There was no meaningful difference in the involvement of males and females on personnel, policy and negotiations committees. See Table 29.

Table 29  
Committee Membership by Sex of Board Members

Committee	Males	Females	Chi-Square Probability
Finance/Budget	29.6%	9.7%	.0016
Legislation/Lobbying	13.6%	25.8%	.0692
Curriculum	21.0%	30.1%	.2314
Public Relations	14.8%	8.6%	.2931
Building/Grounds/ Transportation	28.4%	20.4%	.2950
Personnel	18.5%	12.9%	.4176
Contract Negotiations	35.8%	30.1%	.5245
Policy Development	14.8%	19.4%	.5554



Respondents were asked to describe the degree of their involvement in a variety of school board tasks and functions. For each task or function, respondents stated whether they had personally initiated board action, whether they had discussed the issue in committee or voted on it, or that their board had not discussed the issue.

There was no significant difference between male and female involvement in school board operations. However, there were some specific areas of board operations where there was enough difference in male and female involvement to discern trends. Thirty percent of the female board members stated they had initiated board discussion and action on implementation of a district-wide needs assessment while only 19 percent of the male board members initiated action in this area. Thirty-six percent of the female board members stated they initiated board discussion and action related to development of policies as opposed to only 23 percent of the males.

Male board members, on the other hand, were more apt to initiate board action in the area of hiring the superintendent (18 percent to 12 percent) and the evaluation of the school board (23 percent to 14 percent). See Table 30.

Table 30

Board Members' Involvement in School Board Operations  
by Sex of Board Members

Area	Originated Board Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
District Needs Assessment	19.7%	30.0%	.0776
Policy Development	23.7%	6.0%	.1266
Employment of Superintendent	18.9%	12.9%	.1714
Evaluation of Board	23.3%	14.0%	.1990
Board/Superintendent Relations	13.9%	8.2%	.5240
Evaluation of Superintendent	23.4%	27.8%	.6573
District Goals and Objectives	31.6%	27.8%	.8070
School Board Procedures	15.3%	16.9%	.9041

There was no significant difference between the involvement of male and female respondents in support operations. The four support areas included in the questionnaire were the planning and development of buildings and facilities, the maintenance of buildings and facilities, transportation and food services. However, in all four areas male respondents more frequently initiated board action than did female respondents. This trend is

consistent with other findings within this study as well as some previous related studies. It is also consistent with a common comment made by both male and female respondents, that male board members showed more interest in buildings, buses and budgets while female board members showed more interest in student and program issues. It is interesting to note that male board members more often initiated action in relation to the food service program than did women. This is the one support area where traditional sex role stereotypes might have suggested different results. With this one exception, these trends generally support the idea that male and female board members are most active in those areas which are closely related to their life experiences and skills. See Table 31.

Table 31

Involvement with Support Services by Sex of  
Board Members

Committee	Originated Board Discussion/Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
Transportation	17.5%	8.9%	.2458
Food Service	11.9%	6.9%	.5783
Planning Buildings and Facilities	21.3%	16.3%	.6062
Maintenance of Buildings and Grounds	20.0%	16.5%	.7465

There was one educational program area where there was a statistically significant difference between the involvement of male and female board members. Twenty-four percent of the female respondents stated they had initiated board action related to graduation requirements as opposed to only 12.8 percent of the male board members. Since the current trend in Iowa is toward higher graduation standards, it is fair to speculate the female board members are in the forefront of this movement.

In four educational program areas, there was no statistically significant difference between the involvement of male and female respondents, but frequency trends were different enough to be noted. Female respondents more frequently initiated board actions in the areas of educational research, long-range curriculum planning, development of curriculum objectives, and evaluation of curriculum. These findings again reflect that female board members are more pro-active when dealing with program and student-centered issues. See Table 32.

Table 32  
Involvement with Educational Program by Sex of  
Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Originated Board Discussion/Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
Graduation Requirements	12.8%	23.6%	.0399
Curriculum Planning	10.3%	20.9%	.1507
Educational Research	8.5%	13.4%	.1602
Curriculum Objectives	11.8%	12.5%	.2335
Civil Rights and Equity Issues	3.9%	4.8%	.4293
Textbook Selection	4.0%	6.0%	.5289
Homework Requirements	2.9%	3.6%	.6574
Course Offerings	15.2%	16.1%	.6607
Vocational Education	10.3%	7.0%	.7488
Grading Systems	6.9%	6.9%	.8935
Athletics	16.9%	18.6%	.9290

There were no discernable differences in the levels of involvement of male and female board members in the other educational program areas. This includes the areas of athletics and educational equity. Although the general comments of board members support the idea that male board members are more involved with athletics, there is nothing

in the study that would reinforce that conclusion. However, it should be remembered that degree of involvement does not in any way connote support for or opposition to athletics. Although female board members show more interest in working on civil rights and equity concerns when they come on the board, it does not seem to translate into actual increased involvement while they are on the board.

There was no significant difference in the involvement of male and female respondents with communications and public relations issues. There were two areas where the frequency with which male and female board members initiated board action was different enough to merit attention. Male board members were more apt to initiate board action related to the provision of community services and female board members more frequently initiated board action related to lobbying and legislation. See Table 33.

Table 33  
Involvement with Communications and Public Relations  
by Sex of Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Originated Board Discussion/Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
Community Services	14.7%	10.6%	.1378
Lobbying and Legislation	17.1%	27.9%	.2143
Community Surveys	27.8%	34.8%	.3369
Grievance Procedures	6.5%	3.4%	.6058
Staff/Parent Communications	18.2%	13.5%	.6508
Information Dissemination	22.4%	27.3%	.6843

There was no statistically significant difference in the involvement of male and female respondents in issues related to budget and finance. There was one area where the frequency with which male and female board members initiated board action differed enough to merit attention. Male board members more frequently initiated board action in relationship to purchasing procedures than did female board members. Male board members more frequently initiated board action in all six areas reviewed, but the difference between male and female involvement was not what might have been expected given male board members' greater motivation and interest to work in this area. It appears that once again

the differences between the interests and desires of male and female board members, when they came on the board, are muted in the actual board work process. Board members often face pressures to get involved in issues that they have little motivation to deal with. See Table 34.

Table 34

Involvement with Budget and Finance Issues  
by Sex of Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Originated Board Discussion/Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
Purchasing Procedures	7.9%	2.3%	.0874
Auditing Procedures	5.2%	3.3%	.5908
Accounting System	6.7%	3.4%	.6360
Financial Planning	11.8%	11.2%	.7991
Revenue Development	9.2%	6.9%	.8365
Budget Development	8.0%	6.7%	.9435

There was no significant difference between the involvement of male and female respondents in personnel issues. Male board members more frequently initiated board action in all these areas but the differences were minimal in most instances. See Table 35.



Table 35  
Involvement with Personnel Issues by Sex of  
Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Originated Board Discussion/Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
Staff Objectives	5.2%	2.2%	.3097
Employee Compensation	5.2%	2.2%	.3457
Employee Hiring	14.1%	8.8%	.4294
Staff Training	7.9%	5.6%	.4357
Staff Evaluation	11.7%	8.1%	.7468
Employment Policies	12.5%	8.8%	.8108
Civil Rights Issues	5.1%	3.4%	.8523
Administration/Staff Relations	15.8%	13.6%	.9236

There is no statistically significant difference in the involvement of male and female board members with pupil service issues. However, female board members more frequently initiated board action in three of the four areas reviewed. See Table 36.

Table 36  
Involvement with Pupil Services by Sex of  
Board Members

Area of Responsibility	Originated Board Discussion/Action		Chi-Square Probability
	Males	Females	
Psychological, Social and Health Services	2.6%	7.8%	.3234
Student Attendance	3.8%	6.8%	.6748
Student Equity Issues	2.6%	2.3%	.6898
Guidance Counseling	7.5%	11.0%	.7315

#### General Comments

Each respondent was asked in an open-ended format to comment on the roles of men and women on school boards. A majority of the respondents took advantage of this opportunity to express their subjective perspectives on the subject. A complete unedited list of the comments is found in the Appendix. The most common comments of female and male board members are listed in Tables 37 and 38.

Table 37

General Comments of Female Board Members\*

- 
1. School boards operate best when they have representation from both sexes. They bring different strengths to the board.
  2. Male board members are primarily interested in budgets, buses and buildings. They show little interest in curriculum and students.
  3. Female board members show more interest in curriculum and program than male board members.
  4. Male board members tend to stereotype female board members. They tend not to listen to me or take me seriously.
  5. Female board members are better listeners; therefore, they get more calls and inquiries from constituents.
  6. Because of their involvement as mothers, female board members know more about children and schools.
  7. The priorities of male and female board members are different.
  8. There are few differences between male and female board members.
  9. My experience as an educator makes me a better board member.
  10. Male board members are satisfied with the status quo. Female board members are more apt to be change agents, concerned with program quality. They are more willing to rock the boat and push administration.
  11. Female board members are better prepared for board meetings. They do their homework.
  12. Female board members bring more emotion, sensitivity and humanity to the board process.
- 

\*Limited to comments made by three or more respondents in order of their frequency.

Table 38  
General Comments of Male Board Members\*

- 
1. There are no significant differences between male and female board members.
  2. School boards operate better when they have both males and females represented because they bring different strengths to the board.
  3. Female board members are too emotional. They shy away from making the tough decisions.
  4. Female board members have a better understanding of curriculum and classroom issues.
- 

\*Limited to comments made by three or more respondents in order of their frequency.

Seventy-one percent of the female respondents took advantage of the opportunity to make open-ended comments at the close of the questionnaire. Only 42 percent of the male respondents did so. This difference is significant and it may indicate a number of things. They are: (1) female board members were more interested in this study than were male board members; (2) male board members have less time to give to board-related activities than do female board members; and (3) female board members value educational research more than male board members. No judgment is made about which of these factors may have contributed to this sex-based difference.

The most common comment of female board members and the

second most common comment of male board members was that school boards function most effectively when both males and females are represented on them. These respondents expressed the definite opinion that males and females bring distinctly different strengths to the school board which complement one another. It is clear also from both male and female comments that many board members perceive the male strengths to be in the areas of budget, finance, transportation and buildings and grounds, while the female strengths are perceived to be in the areas of curriculum, public relations, staff development and program evaluation. There was also the clear perception that boards that are all male or all female would spend an inordinate amount of time in the areas of their interest and expertise rather than adequately dealing with all the necessary issues.

There were board members who felt there were few if any significant differences between male and female board members. In fact, this was the most common comment of male respondents. It was far down the list at number eight among the comments of female respondents. It was quite clear that many male respondents played down the differences between male and female board members while many females were quick to point out their perception of those differences.

The most common criticism male board members made about their female counterparts was that they were too emotional

and that because of their sensitivity and unwillingness to see any one get hurt were not good at making tough decisions. This was even translated into fiscal irresponsibility by one male board member who felt female board members would spend money the district did not have in order to serve everyone who had a need. The listening skills that many female board members were proud of even came in for some criticism. There was a perception among some male board members that female board members listened to and were influenced by too many trivial complaints in the community.

The most common criticism female board members made of their male counterparts was that they tended to stereotype the women on the board and not take them seriously. Because females are a minority on most Iowa boards, there was a perception that males could still get away with ignoring their input when the votes came around. They strongly criticized the listening skills of male board members whether it be listening to their constituents or their female peers. Some female board members felt male board members were openly hostile to having females on the board.

Other comments that showed up on both male and female lists were as follows:

1. Female board members are better listeners and constituents, especially mothers, feel more comfortable taking their concerns to them.

2. Female board members are better educated than their male counterparts. (This is not born out by the results of the component of this study on board members' backgrounds, however, the perception may come from the fact that more female board members were educators by training and exhibited greater knowledge of curriculum and program operation.)
3. Male board members come to board meetings less well prepared than their female counterparts.

It was curious to note that often times what male respondents perceived as their strength was often perceived as a weakness by female respondents and vice versa. The researcher, however, would again like to accentuate that the overwhelming sentiment of both female and male board members was that school boards are more effective when both men and women are represented on them.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was fourfold. First among these was to study the background of the male and female school board members in Iowa to determine if there were significant differences which might have implications for school governance. The second purpose was to compare the motivation for male and female board members seeking board membership to see if there were differences that again may have implications for school governance. The third purpose was to determine if there were significant differences in the way male and female school board members carry out their responsibilities. The fourth and final purpose of the study was to determine if women on Iowa school boards would set the same educational priorities as would their male counterparts.

In this chapter, the findings are summarized, the conclusions are stated, and recommendations for future action are made. Listed first in each area are those variables where there was a significant difference between male and female school board members. This is followed by a presentation of those areas where the differences between males and females were not statistically significant, but



where frequency differences appeared great enough to merit attention.

### Background and Experiences of School Board Members

Significant differences between male and female board members were revealed in six background areas. They were as follows:

1. Marital Status. Although the large majority of all Iowa school board members were married, almost all the single school board members were females. One of these women had never married, but most of them were widowed or divorced. There was only one single male in the sample poll included in this study. Single females are either more apt to run for the school board or more electable school board candidates than are single males.

2. Employment Status. Approximately 94 percent of the male respondents were working outside the home as opposed to 58 percent of the female respondents. A high percentage of male board members were self-employed (60 percent) as opposed to only 19 percent of female board members. Thirty-three percent of the females were homemakers. No males listed themselves as homemakers.

3. Occupation. Fifty-five percent of the male board members were either farmers or craftsmen (carpenters, electricians, plumbers, welders, etc.) by occupation. Fifty-two percent of the female board members were either homemakers or educators by occupation (33 percent homemakers

and 18 percent educators). Twice as many females as males came from the professional ranks including doctors, nurses, lawyers, dentists and social workers. Women very clearly come from occupational backgrounds that are more child and school centered than do their male counterparts.

4. Parental Status. The vast majority of board members (male and female) were married and had children. It is clear that parenthood is one of the primary prerequisites for running for and being elected to the school board. However, there was one area of significant difference in the parental status of males and females on school boards. Male respondents were more apt to have children in elementary school while they were on the board than were their female counterparts. It appears that females who may still be primarily responsible for child care, delay their school board candidacy until their children are out of elementary school. This may also be responsible for moderately higher age of female school board members in Iowa.

5. District Enrollment. Female board members were apt to come from larger school districts than their male counterparts. Fifty percent of the female respondents came from school districts with enrollments of 800 or more students as opposed to 28 percent of the male board members. It is clear that it is easier for a female board candidate to be accepted and elected in a larger, more urban school district than it is in a smaller, more rural school

district. Given this trend, the rural nature of Iowa may very well explain why Iowa's percentage of female school board members trails behind the national average.

6. Organizational Membership Prior to Board Candidacy. Female board members tended to be more involved with school related or youth organizations than their male counterparts. They were also more involved on school advisory committees as well as recreational/social organizations. Male respondents were more involved with professional and business-related organizations. Females, because of their social and organizational membership trends, were more apt to have closer contact with schools and school children than their male counterparts. It can reasonably be concluded that they come to the board more directly aware of issues related to children and education.

#### Areas of Difference Worth Noting

There were two background areas where the differences between male and female respondents were not statistically significant but where frequency differences merited comment. They were as follows:

1. Age. Female board members were moderately older than their male counterparts. This may be related to an earlier finding that women wait until their children are older before becoming actively involved in school board politics.

2. Organizational Leadership. Female board members were more likely to have held organizational leadership experience than were their male counterparts. This includes serving as officers of the organizations to which they belonged before their school board candidacy. This means that female candidates are more apt to come to the board being familiar with strategies for running meetings, setting agendas and keeping minutes.

There were four background areas where there was no difference between male and female school board members. The four areas were level of education, family income, board tenure and political affiliation.

1. Education. School board members in Iowa are well educated. Twenty-five percent of the board members surveyed had master's degrees and beyond 50 percent had a bachelor's degree. Seventy-five percent had completed some college work beyond high school while 25 percent had completed high school, but had no further education. These figures were quite similar for both male and female board members.

2. Family income. Iowa school board members are firmly entrenched in the middle class to upper-middle class income levels. Seventy percent of both male and female respondents came from families earning \$30,000 a year or more.

3. Board Tenure. Iowa school board members are fairly well tenured. Approximately 33 percent had served seven

years or more on a school board. Another 33 percent had served four to six years on the board and yet another 33 percent were serving their first three years on the board. These figures again were similar for male and female board members.

4. Political Affiliation. Iowa board members tend to be Republicans first, Independents secondly, and then Democrats. There is some tilt toward more females being Democrats and males being Republicans but the results are not conclusive.

#### Motivation for Seeking School Board Membership

There were four areas of significant difference between male and female respondents in the area of motivation for their board candidacy. They were:

1. Representation of Group. Female school board members were more apt to list the representation of an under-represented group as one of their primary reasons for running for board candidacy. This seems to reflect that their sex and the under-representation of women on school boards is often one reason for their board candidacy.

2. My Own Children. Male school board members more often were motivated by concern for the education of their own children as a primary reason for their board candidacy. This was a lesser motivating factor for the female respondents.

### 3. Equal Educational Opportunity Concerns.

Significantly more female than male respondents stated that concern for equal educational opportunity was one of the four most important motivating factors in their board candidacy. Female board members, more often than their male colleagues, were motivated by concern for fairness to all in the school system and the chance to eliminate discriminatory policies and practices.

4. Support for Board Candidacy. Female school board members received more support from school and youth-centered community groups (PTA, etc.) than did their male counterparts. This may have been influenced by the fact that women tended to be members of these groups more often than did their male colleagues. Male school board members received more support from the business community and business-related organizations (Kiwanis, Jaycees, etc.) than did female school board members. This follows from the fact that males were more apt to be members of such business organizations. It is appropriate to mention in a sex-based study such as this that some of these organizations have not traditionally allowed female membership regardless of the individual's involvement in the business world.

There are six areas in the realm of motivation for board candidacy where there were differences between male and female board members worth noting. They were as follows:

1. Board Performance. Male board members more frequently pointed to dissatisfaction with the performance of the current school board as a primary reason for their board candidacy than did female board members.

2. School Closings. Male board members more frequently ranked issues related to school closings as primary motivating factors for their board candidacy. Although it is not clear, there is some indication that this concern for keeping schools open is a higher priority for males than females.

3. School administrators give more encouragement to male school board candidates than to female school board candidates. Although there is a general tenet in school administrative theory that school administrators should remain aloof from school politics, it is clear that they do become involved in subtle ways in encouraging or discouraging board candidates. Male candidates receive a greater share of this encouragement.

4. Male school board candidates receive more encouragement from sitting school board members for their candidacies than do female school board candidates. There is again clearly an informal system by which sitting school board members encourage and discourage school board candidacies in the community. Male school board candidates report receiving this kind of encouragement more often than do their female counterparts.

5. Female school board candidates are more apt than their male colleagues to get encouragement for their candidacy from teacher associations. This is related to another finding of this study that 18 percent of the female school board members studied were professional educators. This finding could also have some potentially interesting effects on policy making.

6. In most Iowa school districts board candidates do not get formal public endorsements from organizations, but when they do, male and female board candidates tend to get endorsements from different groups. Female candidates were more apt to get endorsements from teacher associations, various women's groups (AAUW, etc.) and school improvement groups. Male candidates were more apt to get endorsements from county tax associations, boards of realtors, and athletic booster clubs.

Despite the above differences, male and female school board members both listed two areas of motivation most often among the primary motivating factors for their candidacy. The two areas were general interest in the schools and duty to the community. However, along with these generally civic-minded concerns, most board candidates bring with them more personal concerns which also serve to motivate their board candidacy.



### Governance Styles

Ten areas related to governance styles were reviewed. In the following areas significant differences between male and female respondents emerged.

1. Board Leadership. Although female board members had more experience in organizational leadership before they came on the board than their male counterparts, this did not carry over to the school board environment. Male board members served more often as board president and vice president than did their female counterparts. It may be that males who make up the majority on most Iowa school boards are still reluctant to elect a female to serve as board president, or that women on Iowa school boards are reluctant to actively seek leadership positions on boards.

2. Group Influence. Male board members are more influenced by their peers on the school board than are their female counterparts. This could be interpreted in a number of ways. It could be happening because, in most instances, the majority of the board is male and they see issues from similar perspectives. It could be that male board members value board unanimity more highly than do female board members. Female board members appear to operate more independently of their peers and to value unanimous votes less than their peers. This is a result of the unique perspectives and experiences females bring to the board.

3. Parent Communications. Female board members communicated more often with parents than did their male counterparts. This is reinforced by the comments of both male and female board members in which they stated parents felt more comfortable bringing their concerns to the attention of female board members. Some male board members saw this as a negative trait and felt that women listened to too many petty complaints. However, some males and most females thought this was a strength of the female board member.

4. Reading and Self-Education. Female board members spent more time reading educational literature and researching educational issues than did their male counterparts. Male board members more often relied on the superintendent's recommendations or acted by instinct. It is interesting to note that there was very little difference in this area between female board members who were homemakers and those who worked outside the home. Therefore, this difference cannot be based on the traditional assumption that homemakers have more time for board work than their peers who work outside the home.

5. Information on Finance, Budget, Buildings and Grounds. Female board members relied more on the administration and staff for leadership and information on such topics as budget, finance, buildings and grounds, than on their personal experiences in these areas. Male board

members acted more independently of the administration and staff on these issues.

6. Information About Special Needs Programs, Instruction and Curriculum. Male board members relied more on the administration and staff for leadership and information in the areas of programs for students with special needs as well as curriculum and instruction in general. They relied less on their personal background and experiences in these areas. Female board members acted more independently of the administration and staff on these issues.

7. Board Members' Perceptions of their Strengths. When male board members listed what they perceived to be their strengths, they included relatively general characteristics such as objectiveness, common sense, open mindedness, organizational skills, personal experience and the ability to compromise. Female board members listed more specific strengths such as experience in education, knowledge of children, communications with the public, curriculum expertise, parent/student advocacy and preparation for board meetings.

8. Board Members' Perceptions of their Weaknesses. Male board members perceived their weaknesses to include poor speaking skills, the inability to express themselves, impatience and intolerance of other's opinions, and excessive opinionation and subjectivity. Female board

members, on the other hand, saw their faults including lack of assertiveness, dislike of conflict, and wanting to please everyone. Females almost unanimously admitted to a weakness when it came to issues related to finance and budget.

### Areas of Difference that Merit Mention

In the following areas related to governance style, the difference between male and female respondents were not statistically significant, but frequencies were different enough to have some implications for future policy.

1. Majority Opinion versus Own Judgment. Male board members more frequently stated they would follow their own judgment rather than the opinions of the majority of their constituents. Female board members gave more weight to constituent opinion. This may be reflected in the greater receptivity of female board members to public contacts. Male board members were more apt to see their election to the board as a public plebiscite to use their best judgment. Female board members viewed the board role more politically than male board members and felt a greater need to respond to on-going constituent concerns.

2. Legislative versus Corporate Board Theory. Female board members more frequently associated themselves with the legislative theory of school board operations and the concepts of open debate, active vigilance, representation of a constituency, and a more active board role in general. Male board members more frequently associated themselves

with the corporate board approach and the concepts of general goal setting, periodic review of agency status, staff support, and a slightly more passive board role in general.

3. Informal Contacts with Peers on the School Board. Male board members reported more frequent contacts with their peers on the school board, outside of formal school board meetings, than did their female counterparts. This may reflect the fact that the majority on most Iowa school boards are male and that females are less apt to be included in the informal communications network. Lone female members on the board often complained of being left out of informal communications. It may also reflect the trend of female board members to act independently of their peers on the board and to be more receptive to constituent concerns.

4. Board Contacts with Students. Female board members reported more frequent communication with students than did male board members. This is consistent with the general findings that female board members gave higher priority to parent/student-centered issues and more often viewed themselves as parent/student advocates. Male board members more often left student and program-centered issues in administrative hands.

5. Attendance at School Events and Visits to Schools. Female board members reported more frequent visits to schools and classrooms as well as more frequent

attendance at school events generally than did their male counterparts. Board members, both male and female alike, gave female board members good grades on doing their homework between board meetings. This included reading the documents sent out by the administration, doing research and visiting school programs. There was some evidence that school administrators were somewhat alarmed and threatened by the greater visibility of female board members in the schools.

6. Review of Legislation and Lobbying. Female board members reported spending more time studying educational legislation and lobbying on legislative issues than did their male counterparts. Male board members were more apt to rely on administrators for information on legislation and for lobbying for legislative change.

7. Contract Negotiations. Male board members were more apt to rely on their own experiences and instincts in dealing with collective bargaining and contract negotiations and less apt to rely on administrative leadership in this area than were their female counterparts. This may be related to the greater personal experience male board members have in budget and finance issues.

In all other areas of governance styles reviewed in this study there were no differences between male and female board members.

### Priorities of Male and Female Board Members

The findings related to the priorities of male and female board members are as follows. There were significant differences between the priorities of male and female board members in the four areas:

1. Budget and Finance. Men expressed a greater interest in working on issues related to the budget, finance, buildings, grounds and transportation than their female colleagues. They also reported actually spending more board time on these issues than females did during their board years. This was supported by the fact that men often served on budget/finance committees while females were seldom represented on these committees.

2. Curriculum and Policies. Female respondents expressed a greater desire to work on issues related to curriculum, instruction and the development of written educational policies than did their male colleagues. They also reported having actually spent more time working on these issues than did males. Female board members felt it was very important to have updated, clearly-written board policies in all areas of the educational process. Male board members seemed more comfortable operating without written policies.

3. Male board members were much more apt to have served on budget and finance committees than were their female counterparts. Females were seldom represented on

these committees. This is a reflection of greater male interest and priority in this area of policy making.

4. Graduation Requirements and Program Standards. Female board members initiated more board activity and discussion in the area of graduation requirements and program standards than did males. This finding is consistent with their greater interest in school program and curriculum.

There were a number of areas where the difference in the priorities of male and female board members were not significantly different statistically, but where differences were great enough to merit attention.

1. Board/Superintendent Interaction. Male board members more frequently were concerned with improving board/superintendent relations when they came on the school board than were their female counterparts. Female board members gave a higher priority to evaluating the performance of the superintendent. The amount of time males and females actually spent in these areas was consistent with their stated priorities.

2. Collective Bargaining. Male board members expressed a greater interest in working on issues related to collective bargaining than did their female colleagues. They also reported having spent more time on this issue once they were on the board. This is consistent with their greater interest and experience in budget and finance



concerns.

3. Student Achievement. Females were more interested in increasing student achievement than were their male counterparts. They also reported spending more time working toward this goal during their board years. This again is consistent with their greater interest and experience in curriculum and instruction.

4. Curriculum Committees. Females were more often members of board committees on curriculum than were their male counterparts.

5. Buildings, Grounds and Transportation. Male board members were more often members of committees on buildings, grounds or transportation than were their female colleagues.

6. Legislative/Lobbying Committees. Female board members were more often members of legislative/lobbying committees than were their male colleagues. This is consistent with the earlier finding that females spent more time studying and reviewing educational legislation.

7. Board Operations. Female board members initiated more board action and discussion of district-wide needs assessments and the need for written board policies than did males.

8. Superintendent Hiring and Board Evaluation. Male board members reported initiating more discussion and board action in relation to hiring superintendents and administrators than did female board members. They also

initiated more discussion and board activity related to evaluation of the board itself.

9. Educational Research. Female board members initiated more board discussion and action related to educational studies and research than did males. Males appear to be more willing to act without the benefit of research.

10. Curriculum. Female board members reported initiating more board discussion and action related to curriculum planning, the development of curriculum objectives and the evaluation of curriculum than did male board members. This again reinforces other findings in this study.

11. Public Relations and Community Service. Male board members initiated more board discussion and action in the area of public relations and providing community services than did female board members. This finding contradicts the findings of several related studies that found that female board members gave higher priority to public relations and community involvement. It is also somewhat inconsistent with the earlier finding in this study that female board members had more contact with parents and were viewed as being more approachable than their male colleagues.

12. Legislation and Lobbying. Female board members reported more frequently initiating board discussion and

action related to interpretations of legislation and lobbying legislators in regard to legislation.

There were no other differences in the priorities of male and female school board members.

### General Comments

The open-ended comments of both male and female board members tended to overwhelmingly confirm the findings that have already been listed for this study. They suggest that board members' perceptions are that the differences between male and female board members are even greater than the statistics of this study indicate. Several other perceptions of board members were evident in the comments. They were the following:

1. Male and female board members overwhelmingly expressed the sentiment that boards that have both male and female representation operate more effectively and better meet the needs of all the district's constituents.

2. Female board members felt that many male board members tend to stereotype females and that they tend not to listen to them or take them seriously. This tends to frustrate female board members who are usually a minority of one or two on the board.

3. Both male and female board members felt the female board members did their homework more conscientiously and were better prepared for board meetings.

4. There were comments made by both female and male board members that suggested that they perceived that male board members tended to be more satisfied with the status quo, more willing to accept administrative recommendations without scrutiny. They perceived female board members to be more concerned with program quality and more willing to rock the boat and to question the administration.

5. Female board members perceived that they brought emotion, sensitivity and humaneness to the policy-making process while males tended to feel female board members were too emotional and that they shied away from making tough decisions where someone was going to be hurt.

6. Female board members perceived the differences between male and female board members to be greater than did male board members. They also felt that the increasing numbers of females on school boards would have a bigger impact on the policy-making process than did males.

7. Female board members took greater advantage of the opportunity to speak their mind by making general comments at the end of the research questionnaire. They also returned questionnaires in greater numbers. Female board members appeared to be more interested in this study than their male colleagues and probably gave it more significance as well.

### Conclusions

There were four hypotheses tested in this study. They were as follows:

Hypothesis One:      There is no difference in the background and experiences of male and female school board members in Iowa.

Based on the findings of this study, hypothesis number one is rejected. There are significant differences in the backgrounds and experiences of male and female school board members in Iowa.

Hypothesis Two:      There is no difference in the factors which motivate male and female school board members in Iowa to seek board membership.

Based on the findings of this study, hypothesis number two is rejected. There are significant differences in the motivation for candidacy of male and female school board members in Iowa.

Hypothesis Three:    There is no difference in governance styles of male and female school board members in Iowa.

Based on the findings of this study, hypothesis number three is rejected. There are significant differences in the governance styles of male and female school board members in Iowa.

Hypothesis Four: There is no difference in the priorities male and female school board members place on contemporary educational issues in Iowa.

Based on the findings of this study, hypothesis number four is rejected. There are significant differences in the priorities of male and female school board members in Iowa.

#### Recommendations

The findings and conclusions of this study provide the basis for the following recommendations:

1. It is recommended that communities more actively seek out, recruit and encourage female school board candidates. The results of this study clearly show that males and females bring different experiences, types of motivation, governing styles and priorities to the school board. Both have their unique strengths and weaknesses which complement one another. Board members themselves expressed the feeling that boards operate more effectively, and perform their policy-making responsibilities more broadly across the spectrum from budgets to curriculum, when both males and females are represented on the board. There is also evidence to show that the full benefit of this diverse representation is not felt when there is one woman on a five- or seven-member board. A greater balance of male/female representation on the board is desirable.

Approximately 21 percent of Iowa's school board members are female. This is considerably below the national figure

of 33 percent. School superintendents, school board members, and leaders in the business community have a special role to play in this effort. The results of this study show that they play active roles in encouraging or discouraging school board candidates. Historically, all three of these groups have been more supportive of male than female candidates. This may be due to the fact that the three groups are predominantly male and tied into traditional male networks. Superintendents, current school board members, and leaders in the business community should begin looking outside their natural networks for good board candidates. This is especially true at a time when some communities in Iowa are having trouble finding good board candidates and competition for board seats is sometimes limited. Iowa can no longer afford to underutilize 50 percent of its potential educational leadership pool.

2. It is recommended that school superintendents, who work in communities where there is one or no females on the school board, play a more active and creative role in insuring that their boards give adequate attention to their policy-making responsibilities in the areas of academic programs, curriculum instruction and community relations. If this is not done, these areas may be neglected. Instruction and curriculum are the very heart of the educational program.

The same recommendation would be made in reverse to those superintendents who are working with one or no males represented on the board. In this instance, it is recommended that they play a more active and creative role in insuring that these boards give equal and adequate attention to their policy-making responsibilities in the areas of budget, finance, transportation, as well as buildings and grounds. There are currently no school boards in Iowa with so little male representation.

3. It is recommended that training be conducted for school board members and superintendents in the area of human relations, communications and sex equity. The findings of this study show that male board members are still reluctant to vote females into board leadership positions. What some female board members perceive as their strengths are viewed as weaknesses by male board members and vice versa. Female board members often feel as if males on the board do not take them seriously. The difference in the priorities of male and female board members sometimes leads to conflict or misunderstandings on school boards. This type of training has been emphasized in Iowa for teachers, but administrators and school board members have only been minimally involved. If board members better understand why males and females act the way they do on school boards, many of the misunderstandings currently present might be eliminated.



4. There is evidence in this study to support the idea that increases in the number of women on school boards may subtly change the nature of educational policy making in the future. Female board members currently are more involved in the parenting process and with the schools their children attend. They are more likely to have formal training in education and their interests center upon child and parent. For this reason, they take a more active role in policy making, they ask more specific questions at board meetings, and they attend schools and school events more often.

These attributes of the female school board members are basically positive attributes for board members to have, but they could lead to subtle conflicts with superintendents and peers on school boards because they are different from the attributes of more passive male board members and fly in the face of some classic board traditions of days when boards were all male, working with a male superintendent. Boards often gave little attention to instruction and curriculum. The current tendency for female board members to put emphasis in this area may cause conflict.

To minimize the conflicts that arise as the numbers of females on school boards continue to grow, the following recommendations are made:

- a. That better training be provided for superintendents and school board members on the rights and

responsibilities of the board and the superintendent in all areas of the school agenda from budgets to curriculum. This training should recognize the board's important policy-making responsibilities in the areas of program, curriculum and public relations and the rights and responsibilities of school administrators. It should stress approaches to team efforts between the board and the administration.

b. That school boards' and superintendents' first agenda be to reach consensus on acceptable written guidelines for school board operations. The literature defines no clear distinct line between policy making and administration. Therefore it is important for harmony that the superintendent and the board members reach mutual agreement on how they want to operate locally. This mutual consensus should take into account the potentially different operating styles and different priorities of male and female board members or for that matter female and male superintendents.

c. That female board members understand that their knowledge of children, parenting, education, curriculum, and communications brings many strengths to the school board. Their basic tendencies to visit schools, talk to parents and students, and ask probing questions are good qualities. On the other hand, they need to realize that how these things are done will determine whether they fall into

the realm of proper policy making or usurp the superintendent's administrative role.

5. It is recommended that several components of educational administration training programs be strengthened. There is an indication that female school board members will demand stronger administrative leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction as well as policy development and management. These components of the superintendency-training programs should be examined to determine how they may be strengthened.

It is also clear from this study that female board members come to board meetings better prepared than do their male counterparts and better versed in the rules of meeting management. For this reason, it is even more important that superintendents be better prepared for board meetings and well versed in the skills of managing board meetings. The components of superintendency training which deal with board-superintendent relations as well as preparation for the followup to board meetings should also be examined to determine where they can be strengthened to meet contemporary needs.

#### Recommendations for Future Study

1. This study found that the differences between male and female board members were rather consistent regardless of district size, age of the board member or occupation of board members. However, there is very little representation

of urban board members in Iowa and little racial heterogeneity among Iowa school boards. There is a need for a national study of the 100 largest school districts in the country to see whether these findings would hold in those environments as well as state-wide studies in states where there is great racial diversity (e.g., Texas, California, New Mexico, Mississippi, Alabama, New Jersey, etc.).

2. This study examined the backgrounds, motivations, governance styles and priorities of male and female school board members but it did not attempt to determine where they stood on current educational issues to determine if there were differences in their positions on issues like school reorganization, vocational education, discipline, budget management, etc. Such a study would be beneficial in determining the impact of increasing numbers of women on school boards on future educational trends in Iowa and the nation.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Profiles, Motivation, Governance Styles and Priorities  
of School Board Members in Iowa.

INSTRUCTIONS: This questionnaire is divided into four parts. Part I relates to the motivation of board members; part II deals with the governance styles of board members; part III centers on the priorities of board members; and part IV relates to background information on school board members.

Please respond to each question by:

- (1) Circling the numeral of the appropriate response.
- (2) Checking the appropriate column.
- (3) Rank ordering the information requested, or
- (4) Entering the information requested in the blank provided.

Part I: MOTIVATION FOR SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDACY

Q1. What were your motivations for seeking school board membership? Rank order your four (4) most important motivations with #1 as the most important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. District financial and budget concerns.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. School closing or School Reorganization concern.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Dissatisfaction with the performance of the superintendent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Dissatisfaction with the performance of other school administrators.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Personal interest in school affairs and education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sense of duty to the community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Dissatisfaction with the performance of teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Desire to assure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, sex, or disability.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Desire to improve student achievement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Desire to improve student discipline.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Dissatisfaction with the board of education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Desire to improve school/community relations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Desire to represent group who has been underrepresented on the school board (women, minorities, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Desire for improved curriculum and instructional program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Desire to improve the education of my children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Desire for political experience.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Other (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Q2. Who were the groups that encouraged you to seek office and to serve on the school board? Rank order the four (4) most important with #1 being the most important.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| _____ 1. School district administration.         | _____ 7. Local political organizations. |
| _____ 2. School board members (past or present). | _____ 8. Community caucus groups.       |
| _____ 3. Teacher's Association.                  | _____ 9. Business community.            |
| _____ 4. Family members and relatives.           | _____ 10. Civil Rights Organizations    |
| _____ 5. Friends and neighbors.                  | _____ 11. Other (specify) _____         |
| _____ 6. School related organizations            |   |

Q3. Did you receive a public endorsement from any specific group(s) or organization(s)? [Circle the appropriate numeral and if yes indicate the specific group(s)] if applicable.)

1. Yes (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. No

Part II: GOVERNANCE STYLE

Q4. There are two points of view about how school board members should act when they must make a decision. Circle the numeral of the point of view which is closest to your own.

1. The board members should do what the majority of their constituents think they should do even if it is not what they personally think is best.
2. The board members should follow their own judgment regardless of what the majority of their constituents think they should do.

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-2-

Q5. Which of the following most closely reflects your point of view? (Circle the appropriate numeral.)

1. A school board should be like a legislative body. (It acts to create the best policies, through open debate. It watches vigilantly the implementation of its policies. Each school board member acts as a representative or "ombudsman" for a constituency, but works toward consensus on what is best for the entire community.)
2. A school board should be like a corporation board of trustees. (It acts to set general goals. It periodically reviews with administrative staff the status of the institution. Its members generally act as a team to support the work of the organization.)

Q6. If you now serve, or have served in the past, as an officer of your board of education, circle the appropriate numeral and enter the number of years you have held this office.

- |                          |       |                 |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 1. President             | _____ | Number of years |
| 2. Vice-President        | _____ | Number of years |
| 3. Secretary             | _____ | Number of years |
| 4. Other (Specify) _____ | _____ | Number of years |

Q7. Typically which group(s) have the most influence on your decision-making as a board member. Rank order the four (4) most important groups with #1 being the most important.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ____ 1. School district administration.         | ____ 10. Students and student groups.        |
| ____ 2. Teacher's association.                  | ____ 11. Parents.                            |
| ____ 3. School board members - my district.     | ____ 12. School related organizations.       |
| ____ 4. School board members - other districts. | ____ 13. Community caucus or service groups. |
| ____ 5. State school board association.         | ____ 14. Business community.                 |
| ____ 6. Board appointed advisory committees.    | ____ 15. Church groups.                      |
| ____ 7. Civil rights related groups.            | ____ 16. Local political parties or groups.  |
| ____ 8. Family members and relatives.           | ____ 17. Other (Specify) _____               |
| ____ 9. Friends and neighbors.                  |  |

Q8. School board members are involved in a variety of activities. How often in an average month do you engage in each of the following school board related activities? (Check the most appropriate column for each activity listed.)

Meetings, Discussions or Phone Calls Per Month With

Other school board members in your district  
The superintendent of your district  
Building principals  
Teachers and other school employees  
Parents or Parent groups  
Student or student groups  
School board members in other districts  
State legislators

0	1-3	4-6	7 or More

Attending or Visiting (Times Per Month)

School board committee meetings  
School related events or extra-curricular activities  
School buildings and classrooms  
Teacher inservice activities or staff meetings  
State school board training sessions, meetings and conventions

0	1-2	3-4	5 or More

Reading and Studying (In hours per month)

Preparing for board meetings.  
Reviewing educational legislation  
Reading education related journals/articles

0-2	3-5	6-8	9 or More

-3-

- Q9. What is your greatest strength as a school board member? \_\_\_\_\_
- Q10. What is your greatest weakness as a school board member? \_\_\_\_\_
- Q11. Most school board members obtain information from several sources. For each area of school board responsibility listed below, check the one column that reflects your most helpful source of information. The lettered columns correspond to the sources listed A through G below.
- A Personal Experience
  - B Community Persons
  - C Iowa & National Association of School Boards
  - D Teachers and Other Personnel
  - E Superintendent in My District
  - F Other School Board Members Other Districts
  - G Other School Board Members My District

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1. School board procedures							
2. Role of school board member							
3. District's written policy and procedures							
4. Board/Superintendent relations							
5. School finance and budget							
6. Current issues & trends in curriculum and instruction							
7. Curriculum & program development							
8. Programs to meet need of special students							
9. Hiring and evaluating the superintendent							
10. Hiring & evaluating other staff							
11. Buildings, ground & transportation							
12. Civil rights & educational equity issues							
13. School/Community Relations (P.R.)							
14. Contract negotiations							
15. Current legislative issues & lobbying							

## Part III: PRIORITIES OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- Q12. Several areas of school board responsibilities are listed below. In column A Rank Order the four (4) areas you wanted to work with the most when you became a school board member. In column B Rank Order the four (4) areas you actually worked with the most after you became a school board member. Rank Order the four (4) areas in each column with #1 being the area you wanted to work with the most or actually worked with the most.

	A Wanted to Work With	B Actually Worked With
1. Budget/finance		
2. Human Rights & Educational Equity Issues		
3. School/Community Relations (P.R.)		
4. Board/Superintendent relations		
5. Hiring/evaluating the superintendent		
6. Curriculum & instructional program		
7. Extracurricular programs & student activities and athletics		
8. Building, grounds and transportation		
9. Developing educational policies		
10. Contract negotiations		
11. Student discipline		
12. Student achievement		
13. Legislative process, legislation & lobbying		
14. Other (specify) _____		

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- Q13. Does the Board of Education on which you are presently serving use either standing committees or ad hoc committees to accomplish its tasks? (Circle the appropriate numeral.) If your answer is no in both instances proceed to question #16.

a. Standing Committees

b. Ad Hoc Committees

1. Yes      2. No

1. Yes      2. No

- Q14. Do you have a choice of the board committee(s) to which you are appointed?  
(Circle the appropriate numeral.)

1. Yes                      2. No

- Q15. This question relates to school board committee memberships. Check all that apply in each column.

Committee	A Committee Has Existed During My Term on Board	I Have Been Or Am Currently A Member of This Committee
Finance/Budget		
Personnel		
Curriculum		
Policy		
Building/Grounds/Transportation		
Legislative/Lobbying		
Negotiations		
Public Relations		
Other (Specify) _____		
Other (Specify) _____		

### Involvement of School board Members

INSTRUCTIONS: Using the four (4) categories of role involvement, listed below, please check the behavior(s) you most typically demonstrate(d) over the past twelve (12) months (or your last 12 months on the board), for each of the school board tasks and functions listed. Depending upon the degree of your involvement for each task, you may have checks in more than one (1) column.

Column A: If you were the board member or one of the board members who brought the issue to the board of administration, raised a question with the board or administration about the task, or requested a report or study related to this task, check column A INITIATED OR ORIGINATED.

Column B: If you were involved in the discussion and review of this task as a member of a board committee (either standing or ad hoc) check column B REVIEWED IN COMMITTEE.

Column C: If your involvement with the specific task was at the level of discussion and voting at board meeting(s), check column C VOTED AT BOARD MEETING.

Column D: If either you or the board were not involved in the task in anyway, check column D NOT APPLICABLE.

[illegible]

- Q16. School Board Operations**

1. District needs assessment
2. Developing of district goals & objectives
3. Evaluation of school programs
4. Policy development
5. Procedures for school board operations
6. Employment of superintendent
7. Evaluation of superintendent
8. Board self-evaluation
9. Guidelines for board/superintendent interaction

[illegible]

-5-

A Initiated Or Originated	B Reviewed In Comm.	C Voted At Board Mtg.	D Not Applicable
------------------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------

Q17. Support Operations

1. Planning, development/evaluation of facilities
2. Maintenance of buildings and grounds
3. Transportation and school buses
4. Planning and evaluation of the food service


Q18. Educational Program

1. Educational studies or research
2. Long-range curriculum planning
3. Development of curriculum objectives
4. Evaluation of curriculum
5. Vocational education program
7. Athletics
8. Grading & reporting systems
9. Graduation requirements
10. Textbook selection
11. New Courses or deletion of courses
12. Homework requirements
13. Civil rights or educational equity issues


Q19. Communications & Public Relations

1. Determine community attitudes and opinions
2. Communications between staff and parents
3. Information dissemination to public
4. Provision of community services
5. Lobbying and involvement with legislative issues
6. Grievance procedures


Q20. Budget & Finance

1. Development of revenues
2. Budget development based on priorities program
3. Accounting & control procedures
4. Long range financial planning
5. Purchasing
6. Auditing


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[illegible]

1. Development of employment policies & procedures
2. Recruitment & selection of employees
3. Staff training & development
4. Compensation programs
5. Establishment of staff objectives
6. Supervision & evaluation of employees
7. Administration-Staff relations
9. Employment civil rights & equity issues

[illegible]

1. Guidance & counseling program
2. Psychological, social & health services
3. Student attendance
4. Student civil rights or equity issues


Q23. What is your sex? (Circle the appropriate numeral.)

- Q24. What is your age? (Circle the numeral of the appropriate interval.)

- Q25. What is your highest level of formal education? (Circle the appropriate numeral.)

- Q26. What is your present marital status? (Circle the appropriate numeral.)

- Q27. What is your total gross family income? (Circle appropriate numeral.)

- Q28. What is the current status of employment? [Circle the appropriate numeral(s).]

- Q29. What is your occupation? Using the blank provided be specific about the nature of your work.



-7-

- Q30. Are you a parent? (Circle the appropriate numeral and if yes indicate the number of children you have. If no go to question 32.)
1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Children      2. No
- Q31. How many children in your family are currently attending public school in your school district? (Enter the appropriate number in each category.)
1. Elementary (K-5) \_\_\_\_\_      3. High School (10-12) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Junior High or Middle School (6-9) \_\_\_\_\_
- Q32. What is your school district pupil enrollment? (Circle the appropriate numeral.)
1. 0 - 399      3. 800 - 1499  
2. 400 - 799      4. 1500 and above
- Q33. What is the present composition of your school board? (Enter the appropriate numbers.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Male Board Members      \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Female Board Members
- Q34. How many years (including this year) have you served as a school board member?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Total Number of Years Served
- Q35. What is your political affiliation? (Circle the appropriate numeral.)
1. Independent      3. Democrat  
2. Republican      4. Other
- Q36. Before you began your service on the Board of Education, in which of the following had you participated or held membership? (Circle the numeral of all that apply. Name the specific organization(s) in each category in the space directly below the category title.)
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. School or Youth Organizations          | 7. School District Advisory Committee(s) |
| 2. General Service Organizations          | 8. Recreational and Social Club(s)       |
| 3. Church Related Organizations           | 9. Governmental Position or Boards       |
| 4. Alumni or University Associations      | 10. Civil Rights Organization(s)         |
| 5. Political Organizations                | 11. Other _____                          |
| 6. Professional or Business Organizations |  |
- Q37. If you were an officer or board member in any of the above groups or organizations, please indicate the organization(s) and office(s) held.
- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Organization _____ | Office(s) held _____ |
| 2. Organization _____ | Office(s) held _____ |
| 3. Organization _____ | Office(s) held _____ |

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-8-

- Q38. Is there anything else you would care to share on your role as school board member on the role of men and women school board members or on the ways, if any, in which men and women school board members differ from each other in their interests, attitudes, capabilities, behavior or impact on the school district or the Board of Education. If so please use this space for that purpose.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated.

Thomas A. Andersen  
1220 46th Street, Apt. #1  
Des Moines, Iowa 50311  
515/255-1831 (Home)  
515/281-8170 (Office)

APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

1220 46th Street, #1  
Des Moines, Iowa 50311  
February 10, 1986

Dear School Board Member:

As a person who is currently serving on a school board, or who has recently completed a term of office on a school board, you realize how important local control and citizen participation are in the governance of responsibilities of school boards. Very little information has been gathered on the characteristics, motivation, governance styles and priorities of the individuals who serve on Boards of Education.

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in a research study I am conducting with school board members in the state of Iowa. This study is part of a doctoral program in Educational Administration at Drake University and is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Marvin Fellers, Professor Emeritus, at Drake University.

My study will seek to develop a profile of school board members in Iowa. It will attempt to identify their motivation for board candidacy, their governance styles and their educational priorities. Comparisons between male and female board members will be made to determine the impact, if any, of the increasing numbers of female board members on educational policy making. I feel that the results of this research study will be useful to school board members, to school superintendents and community persons who work with school boards. As far as I can determine, it will be the most extensive study of Iowa school board members ever conducted to date.

Your name was selected from a random sample of Iowa school board members, and I would like to ask your cooperation in completing the enclosed questionnaire. Your response to each of the items on the questionnaire is vital to the outcome of this study. Questionnaires will be anonymous, and only group data will be reported. Coding is for remailing purposes only. If you have been off the school board since this past fall, please complete the questionnaire on the basis of your school board experience.

Using the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope, please return the questionnaire to me by February 24th. I recognize that you maintain a very busy schedule and therefore, sincerely appreciate your assistance in this research effort. If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Cordially,

Thomas A. Andersen  
Research Coordinator  
515/255-1831 (Home); 515/281-8170 (Work)

Dear School Board Member:

Recently you received a questionnaire related background, motivation, governance styles, and prior school board members in Iowa. Initial responses to questionnaire have been good.

However, in order for my study to be successful as high a rate of return of the questionnaires as possible. I need your input. Please take time from busy schedule to give to educational research by completing the questionnaire.

If you have already completed and returned it, accept my sincere thanks. Your cooperation is appreciated and I am confident that the results of this study will be useful to school board members, school administrators, and Iowa citizens with an interest and concern for education.

Cordially,

Thomas A. Andersen

1220 46th Street, #1  
Des Moines, Iowa 50311  
March 14, 1986

Dear School Board Member:

Approximately one month ago, I wrote to you requesting your participation in a research study being conducted with school board members in Iowa. As of today, your questionnaire has not been received.

My research indicates that to date very few studies have been conducted that investigate the characteristics, activities, governance styles and priorities of school board members. None have been conducted in Iowa. Since the Board of Education is responsible for the governance of education, it is most important that research be conducted on the men and women that occupy these critical positions. The information derived from the study will enable board members, administrators and community persons greater insight into the nature of school board membership and operations.

I am writing to you again because of the significance each questionnaire has to the validity of this study. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative of school board members in Iowa, it is essential that each person in the sample return their questionnaire. I especially need returns from male school board members.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire or it was misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. I would sincerely appreciate your assistance in this matter. Thanks in advance for your response.

Cordially,

Thomas A. Andersen

## APPENDIX C

### FEMALE BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN STRENGTHS

### Strengths Listed by Female Board Members

"Willingness to listen, compromise, I'm not afraid to ask questions or state an opinion."

"Analysis of issues and communication with the public."

"Having a background in education as a teacher."

"Having been educated to teach and teaching for 10 years."

"Being able to listen and understand both sides of an issue."

"(Caring) about the education of the students, and concern about our financial situation."

"Good listener, objective."

"I am open minded."

"Concern for students."

"I'm sensitive to all sides of an issue - have a calming influence on fellow board members."

"Educational background and knowledge of community."

"Working with other members and asking questions of others involved."

"Doing my homework to be prepared for discussion and action at meetings; coming with good questions based on research."

"Open minded, objective."

"I am or have been a student, parent, teacher, and taxpayer. I can see issues from many points of view."

"Common sense and contact with other parents."

"Being a former teacher/school administrator."

"Common sense attitude - good listener - getting all facts and dealing fairly."

"Understanding how the different segments of the school function; as a result how decisions will affect each segment."



"My accessibility and frequent contact with people in the district."

"My ability to listen and still make a judgment that is unbiased."

"Remaining open-minded on issues until I have all the facts."

"Legislation, curriculum."

"Listening to all without stating my opinion as being board's opinion."

"My personal experience with my own children and husband, also being a woman."

"I am a parent of 4 school aged children."

"Helping to make our school a better educational place for students."

"Willingness to give the time to learn and study issues and ability to convince others of position."

"Former teacher, lived in community many years and know constituency."

"Attitude toward the need for quality education."

"Background in local school system."

"I see education as a valuable asset for everyone."

"I am not hesitant to voice my opinion."

"I want what's best for students, not what's most 'convenient' for administrators."

"I am willing to listen to all that want to be heard."

"Dedication, organization and preparation."

"An interest in curriculum."

"I maintain an open mind to majority of subjects. As a former teacher I have excellent communication with our school teachers."

"Problem solving ability."

"I listen to the people and communicate."

"I believe I am open minded and willing to listen to other points of view, but when I make up my mind I am not afraid to make a decision."

"Being an interested and loyal member."

"Knowledge of school - all aspects."

"Past experience and knowledge of education."

"I feel I am an objective person."

"Having students in school."

"My ability to listen to all sides, and make a rational well thought out decision."

"Time to devote to studying the issues and problems."

"Listening - make decisions."

"Attend meetings regularly - do my homework."

"I am very good with public relations! I will stand up for what I know is right! (good sense of humor.) Open and objective and am not influenced by any person or groups."

"Being at all meetings - prepared - parent/child advocate."

"Being free to go to state/educational meetings and the ability to speak up."

"Listening and relating to needs."

"Communication with local administrators and staff."

"Long range approach to problem solving."

"My education and background; I have worked in education from several perspectives."

"Experience in education."

"Education minded - 'Kid' minded."

"Concern for the school district."

"Asking questions."

"Past experience as teacher and community service experience."

"Consistency, availability, fairness, care about kids."

"Open mind."

"Former education background - BA - UNI - teacher."

"Interest in curriculum, good empathy with public, strong in pressure."

"I'm willing to listen to both sides of an issue before making up my mind."

"Creativity - ideal person."

"My past experience as an elementary teacher in different districts."

"Ability to be objective and fair."

"Community-school relations - curriculum."

"Former teacher, business management, political 'connections'."

"Listen to and support others."

"Understanding children and working for their good."

"To get a good education for all children."

"Honesty in facing all issues."

"My willingness to listen."

"Being open minded on issues; listening to both sides."

"Genuine concern for preservation of a good school system and willingness to take the time to try to achieve that goal."

"Woman's point of view."

"Being a parent and expressing concerns of parents and students."

"Listening to others."

"Becoming informed - background in education."

"I try to keep an open mind and do what's best for students."

"Good communications with other board members and superintendents. Making good decisions."

"As a woman, I tend to see different sides than the men on the board."

"Think clearly - common sense."

"Commitment, good knowledge base, fairly reasonable."

"I am a teacher in a nearby school district."

"Experience."

"My concern for the student and the teachers and classified staff."

"Knowledge re: finance and budgeting."

"My personality which happens to be friendly and outgoing and my knowledge which allows me to have good persuasive powers and believability."

APPENDIX D

MALE BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
THEIR OWN STRENGTHS

Strengths Listed by Male Board Members

- "Open minded - Able to listen to all sides of an issue."
- "Supporting the Superintendent on issues."
- "Farmer - not influenced by any group."
- "My ability to work well with others."
- "Have open mind."
- "I'm independent."
- "Being able to listen and then make a fair decision."
- "Understanding and love of children."
- "Open-minded, objective."
- "Financial matters."
- "One of the few board members that takes the time to visit the classroom."
- "Leadership."
- "Objectivity."
- "Close to school, several children in school."
- "Experience."
- "27 years of job experience as an educator."
- "Ability to be objective in decision making."
- "Knowledge of curriculum, PR,"
- "Ability to listen to both sides, then make a decision."
- "Able to stay open-minded about issues."
- "Common sense."
- "My ability to listen and be objective on issues."
- "Personal experience."
- "Being active in many different school activities, I meet many students and parents to get their feelings on issues."

"Previous/present educational involvement and no children of my own in school to have to guard."

"Above average concern for education and fairness."

"Honesty and having the long-term welfare of the students as #1 priority."

"Taking an interest in what's happening."

"Interest in students (only reason school is there)."

"Community minded as businessman."

"Shortage of time to devote to welfare of school."

"My fairness."

"My ability to analyze and weigh complex problems."

"My ability to relate to people regardless of differences."

"Leader - getting group to reach consensus."

"Objective evaluation - relating positive encouragement and standing fast."

"Open minded and listen."

"Fair and honest representation of constituents."

"Intelligence."

"Common sense."

"Common sense."

"Positive attitude towards the benefits of education to individuals and society."

"Common sense."

"The power to vote on issues."

"Communication between board and parents."

"Fair and just treatment to all school members."

"To be able to control meeting and have an open mind to all sides."

"Experience as an administrator with a Fortune 500 Company."

"Ability to relate to and get along with a majority of people."

"Listening."

"My background."

"Good communications with board members and administration."

"Willingness to compromise."

"Experience on board, many years of education."

"Ability to listen and act on concerns of school."

"Leadership."

"Buying - transportation - reading - building maintenance - school activities."

"Background - university - college of education."

"Awareness of needs."

"Listen first, research, then decide - fairness and honesty."

"Making your decisions known on all issues."

"Organizational/leadership of board activities, planning, scheduling."

"Strong interest in school activities and preservation of 'small schools'."

"Understanding and being able to read into people."

"Able to see both sides of an issue and help compromise."

"Willingness to consider all points of view."

"Life long member of the community, active in civic and social organizations."

"An understanding of how educational systems work from previous experience."



"I make my own decisions on issues."

"Being able to view both sides of issues, and keep your cool."

"Ability to organize a meeting and organize information."

"Ability to digest ideas and sort them out."

"Can make decisions."

## APPENDIX E

### FEMALE BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses Listed by Female Board Members

"Not delving into areas that I am not interested in such as vocational studies, bus bids, driver ed., cars, etc."

"Lack of involvement in day-to-day school activities since I have no children in school."

"Being more informed of the financial aspect."

"Predicting the future impact of the legislature."

"Bias toward teachers."

"Lack of time to do all that needs to be done."

"Not a real good head for figures."

"Not understanding all legislative issues."

"Do not have the enthusiasm I had when first elected eight years ago."

"I am the only woman on the board."

"Understanding and relating to the general budget."

"I do not understand the financial situation of our budget nor do I understand the state's involvement with the funding."

"Familiarity with state and federal laws governing education (lack of)."

"Running out of time to get everything done."

"I am impatient with those who fail to investigate properly the district."

"Understanding finance and budget formulas."

"Do not have time to attend as many school functions as I'd like."

"It is difficult to disagree with those you like and respect."

"Finance."

"Lack of assertiveness toward others who I disagree with."

"Keeping abreast of funding, budget cuts."

"The dislike in not being able to satisfy everyone's desires."

"Finding time to visit schools."

"I get too busy to attend more activities."

"Distance from school and participation in more school activities."

"Budget/finance."

"Lack of experience and difficulty understanding the complex financial issues facing school districts - budgets, funding, etc."

"My feeling of empathy with each cause, and the fact that I worry about kids."

"Maintenance."

"Wanting to be fair to everyone."

"Emotional involvement in decisions."

"Lack of time spent exploring background."

"Not understanding all of financial things."

"Not enough time to spend."

"Budget process and school finance knowledge."

"The above statement may also be weakness."

"Attending AEA and DPI meetings in other communities."

"Understanding all the 'ins and outs' of finance."

"Being a woman."

"Not having enough time to do the job - it requires many hours."

"Understanding budgeting."

"Sometimes swayed by person talking and need to get back on track."

"Don't always speak up."

"Wanting to please everyone."

"Being aware of what is happening in the schools."

"Not being able to do all that is necessary."

"I have 2 children in the school district."

"Financial knowledge of school finance."

"Tolerating negative attitudes of teachers."

"I don't understand as much of the financial parts of the district."

"Understanding the budget in full."

"Not having enough time."

"Not publically vocal."

"Having strong personal opinions on most subjects."

"Budget knowledge."

"Don't spend enough time at school or legislature."

"Getting too emotionally involved in controversial issues."

"Comprehending policy, procedures and changes that occur."

"Expressing myself in public."

"Understanding what other board members don't know."

"Not always saying what I feel is right."

"Sometimes understanding budget and finance."

"Knowing costs of repairs to buidings."

"Verbalizing conflict and reaching concensus."

"Biased toward teachers, work outside my school district - hard to 'stay in touch'."

"Understanding budget, etc. (funding)."

"Little time for informal discussion with clientele."

"Lack of 'aggressiveness' in pushing for evaluation and possible reform."

"Complete understanding of finances."

"Frustration with dealing with people I consider incompetent."

"Lack of knowledge in finances (state level)."

"Lack of understanding of the financial side, budget, mileage, etc."

"Public speaking."

"Not being a parent."

"Lack of complete knowledge of budget."

"Not communicating with the public very often."

"Lack of time to read and research issues."

"Complete understanding of implications to our local district of legislation."

"Hesitation in speaking out on controversial issues."

"Remembering all the financial aspects."

"Lack of knowledge on many issues!"

"My aptitude for figures is something I am working to improve."

"Time spent in school board business is limited."

"Not speaking up in the public."

"Being able to vocalize my view point effectively."

"Being a woman on a board that has been historically all men."

"Not being a member of the community 'clan'. I've only lived in the community 15 years. The community is one where everyone is related. I am related to no one in community - an 'outsider'."

"Impatience with colleagues who vote without broad knowledge or research."

"Inexperience, lack of expertise to make some of the decisions we are required to make."

APPENDIX F

MALE BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
THEIR OWN WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses Listed by Male Board Members

- "Impatience."
- "Lack of patience."
- "Public speaking."
- "The helplessness at negotiations."
- "Amount of time doing the job."
- "A pre-conceived notion of how schools should be run from previous experience."
- "Giving the time necessary to be well informed."
- "Accessibility to public due to job demands."
- "Initiating new programs."
- "Hate organization meetings and state meetings - (boring!)."
- "Lack of experience."
- "Analysis of educational programs."
- "Not being able to pass some issues for the best of the community."
- "Short on time to devote to the job."
- "Time spent on."
- "Need to get into the elementary schools more than I do."
- "P.R."
- "No containing the discussion."
- "Try to please conflicting view points."
- "Intolerance of those with little experience or vision of the importance of education."
- "Jump to conclusions."
- "Not enough time to devote to board service - work and family conflicts."
- "Lack of time."



"Expressing opinions and ideas."

"School finance and budget."

"Political understanding."

"By not putting more pressure on teacher association."

"Not enough time for school activities."

"Understanding budget."

"Not enough communication between parents and board members."

"Lack of education."

"Public speaking and the inability to rapidly assess issues."

"Poor speaker."

"Compassion."

"Tolerance for others."

"Lack of time to keep fully informed."

"Impatient."

"Listening to complaints from irrate parents and saying no."

"Dominate - forget to be good listener."

"My stubbornness on certain issues."

"My low tolerance of radical views."

"My health."

"Shortage of time to devote to welfare to school."

"Intolerance at people who don't do their job."

"Not enough time."

"Impatience with administrators and teachers who seem most concerned with appearances rather than with substance."

"Am sometimes an adversary to seek out others feelings."

"Time available to do the job I'd like to do and working out of town so unavailable to constituents."

"Not a real dynamic leader."

"Ability to voice a clear opinion."

"Uninformed at times."

"Not enough time to spend at conventions and other activities."

"Too little time."

"Not always looking equally at both sides before making a decision."

"Not forceful enough."

"In business so sometimes hard to step on someone toes????"

"Time devoted to board member position."

"Keeping open mind."

"Impatient because change is sometimes so slow."

"Lack of interest in state and national associations."

"Worrying about coaches doing their job."

"Worry too much about problems I can't change or help."

"Lack of ability to express my opinion exactly."

"I'm too conservative."

"Probably don't spend as much time as I should."

"Skills with running a meeting."

"I should spend more time at the job."

"To get a personal issue to the rest of the board."

"Very little apathy for 'weak' teachers, but lacking initiative to confront."

APPENDIX G

GENERAL COMMENTS OF FEMALE BOARD MEMBERS

## General Comments

### Females

"I am aware of a tendency for some men to view teaching for women not as a necessary (income) job; this translates into: salaries do not need to be breadwinner salaries."

"As a woman board member, I seem to get many more calls from parents expressing minor concerns. Many mentioned they didn't think the male board members would look into the situation."

"The majority of men on our board are more interested in budget, transportation, and buildings-grounds and tend to leave curriculum, P.R., teacher inservice, board training sessions to the women."

"Within our school district, I've always felt my ideas and opinions were valued at an equal level as the men by administrators and other board members."

"Outside the district - the reverse has been true."

"Differences between board members seem to be more the result of life experiences rather than gender - at least in my exposure to board behaviors. I have met many men who are sensitive, perceptive and caring - as well as women who are tough, no-nonsense business people. We need to work on recognizing individual differences while ignoring stereotypical thinking."

"Males tend to think of themselves as logical and females as emotional beings. As a female I am classified as a typical and therefore not representative of the local community female 'norm'. These attitudes do seem to have a negative effect on communication with board members. Ex: In recent budget discussions I asked why some members of the board were trying to achieve cost savings of \$30,000.00 beyond the recommendation of the administration. . . One male response was 'I think we should'. The others would not look at or respond."

"I was the first and only woman to be on the school board in our district. It took three years before they listened to me, but all the guys I've served with will now admit I'm a good school board member."

"Through my being on the school board I have served four years on the compensation board for our county. I also serve on an advisory council at Iowa State University. It is for the Educational Administration Section of the Professional Studies Department of the College of Education."

"When I was first elected I was the 4th woman on the board. Until the DM Register mentioned it I never had thought about making the majority of board women. It didn't matter, two men (in the six years) seemed not to really 'hear' my ideas but most were great."

"I feel that a mother will usually call me first because they think I will understand their concerns about their children better than men will. New board members get lots of calls at first because people perceive them as being eager to be of service and perhaps more willing to intercede on their behalf."

"The particular board on which I serve treats me 'chivalrously' but never in a condescending manner because I am the only woman."

"I'm not sure that gender matters as much as personal interest i.e. either men or women could be overly-concerned with athletics and their whole focus be on that. I believe that a well-rounded board consisting of men, women, business people, parents of grade school children, parents of high school children, professionals, laborers, farmers (if non urban district) runs schools best."

"I answered this as my strength on the board. I think in some areas, the men and women buffer each others ideas. I do think it is a good thing to have both on the board."

"I feel men and women of different backgrounds compliment one another on the board. At present, we have a banker, an administrator of the Headstart, a self-employed educational consultant, a lawyer and a tax secretary - The backgrounds - not the gender are complimentary to one another - Both female and male members can be good or poor members dependent upon commitment, background knowledge and ability to express one's self--combined with decision making skills."

"Our school board of this small school consists of several graduates of the school. We are of varying age and experience. We all work toward the common goal of giving our students the best education which is the best chance for the future of Iowa leaders of tomorrow. My grandfather and father also served on this same board."

"I am from a small school in a rural community. Many things are handled with all five board members as the acting committee. Many things are left to administration which is fine, if you are knowledgeable of what is being done. Some board members vote without studying what they are voting about. I feel our board is improving here."

"Our board is made up of five well adjusted, non biased, board members. I personally worked at the school for a number of years so I have a better insight on the inter working of our school."

"I believe there are more differences in individual board members of both sexes than there are between men and women board members."

"I feel it's essential to have both men and women on the school board rather than all men or all women."

"I feel the board I am presently serving on is very well balanced and one of the best we've had because we get an overall view from every side."

"We have three men and two women. Two men are college graduates, the other a postmaster, one woman a college graduate and myself, a homemaker. We all view things differently, one from an educational inside view, and another from practical experience."

"One way men and women differ but always end up with a nice balance is an example of vehicles for the district, the men want to know all about performance, mileage, etc., whereas we are concerned also with room, safety, how practical is a van over a car, material used in seat covers, etc. We always have a complete picture of something with all our input, knowledge and background."

"I believe the priorities are different for men and women."

"Men usually tend to run a business and the women tend to implement programs and oversee who is running them and how well things are running within the expected guidelines."

"It is quite a good mix, men and women. I wonder who thought of it!"

"Our board has been very effective with both male and female members."

"The real problem board members, as I see it, is the one who serves because it looks good on the resume - He doesn't come to all meetings and frequently does not serve a full term there for we sometimes need to start new board members 2-3 times before we get one who is really interested."

"Our board tries to work as a unit but we all have the ability to state our wishes and concerns. We had a hard task of hiring a new superintendent. We did this without spending funds for a consultant. We really worked hard-long hours - first getting our goals for the district in a new superintendent then personally reviewing them. I think women try to go into more depth in problem solving than men. They are happy to take the top covering of a problem"

then to really studying the problem. I have to say the board has been very fair with me as the only woman, in most cases. It has been a rewarding as to the fact of learning experience. We have had many unusual things happen in my 3 years: retiring superintendent, hiring superintendent, termination, staff reduction, 2 civil rights suits (one going to D.M. this was an old suit before I come on board) building new building, teacher hearing/student hearing.

"I haven't had much time to spend on this questionnaire but hope to have answered these questions to the best of my ability. I would be interested in your findings after you have completed this. Judy Meyer, Allison, Iowa 50602."

"When both men and woman are on the board you have a broader picture of your school needs, such as home economics or industrial arts. Part II, question 4 every community has 'its informed people, often the information is wrong. The P.R. of the board and the school newsletter are very important.

"Some areas such as curriculum requirements and parts of budget the state legislature have limited the boards decision making. Because of reorganization our board changed from 5 to 7 members. The transition was great. I enjoy working with this group of people and the school staff."

"I feel there is very little difference. That we all want quality education and have students best interest upper most in our minds."

"The presence of female members on our board has been very positive. I feel that our board meetings have become much more legal and professional since we have had female participation. (We have abandoned 'the good ole boy routine' that was once present.) We have become much more involved in the actual education of our students rather than remain on the peripheral edges (e.g. sports, buses, & etc.)."

"I feel women may bring a little more emotion into discussion which is sometimes very important."

"I am a member of a community college district board. I suspect your survey is directed only to K-12."

"We are a small school in a rural area. I feel our best boards in the last twelve years have consisted of 3 men and 2 women, with representation from the business community a great asset but not wholly understood or appreciated by our farm people. It seems to take farm representatives much longer to be able to learn to work with financial and personal situations and problems, though some became very

proficient. Women can often contribute more understanding and interest on some issues and areas, and also are more approachable on sensitive issues.

"I have often been instrumental in staff-board or staff-administrators relations and have always worked to improve communication so we, as a team, are improving all areas for our kids. I was instrumental in passing a controversial bond issue and as president fought the ensuing legal battles. Now our district is overcoming bitterness and developing pride as our kids are in a new Jr-Sr High building - Their grades are better, absences fewer, attitudes - great! I'm happy - I've enjoyed the challenges and am ready to retire."

"Women tend to be more student-curriculum-PR orientated. Men budget and policy oriented."

"Being a small school district, our board meetings are rather informal. This tradition has been frustrating to me, at times, because as a fairly new member, I feel more structured meetings would be beneficial. This lack of organization seems to filter out into all areas of school board functions and I sometimes feel decisions are reached in a haphazard manner. I see this as the main difference between our male and female board members - the men prefer to keep things informal while the women try to follow stricter procedure. This difference is probably related to the fact that none of the 3 men have further education beyond high school diplomas and the 2 women have furthered their education."

"I seem to remember things longer. I can retain information the others have forgotten and don't realize impact on present decision. I'm not sure whether women do this better than men. I can see I have this superiority with my husband, also. I have more experience helping children do school work. Which makes me more familiar with curriculum and a student ability to learn. It makes me more aware of some of the problems students have."

"I think a board member should have a feel for what is best for the children's educational system and listen to what the community wants too."

"Male board members seem more interested in buildings and grounds, and transportation (buses, cars, etc.) while female board members seem to be more aware of people (staff, students, administrators, parents) and their feelings and needs, and more aware of the relationships of these various groups."



"As the only woman to serve on our school board at present, I am also the first woman to ever be elected here, although others have been candidates in the past. I receive majority of phone calls to board members because I am considered the most approachable of all our members (or so I'm told). I credit this, in part, to my willingness to listen to even the most minor complaint, my status as a former substitute teacher in the district, and my appeal to the voters that communication eliminates problems.

"Men on our board seem less interested in the emotional side of education and nuances of behavior and more interested in budgets, figures, ratios, reports, and the status quo than I. I am more inclined to side with teachers than administration, favor asking students for input rather than dictating policy, and strive for flexibility. In all fairness, I spend as much time at school as a parent and observer than all of my four counterparts combined, just because I do NOT work outside the home and have more time to keep tabs on what's happening. Our board members are very equal in ability and have genuine respect for each other. We work well together and share ideas always."

"The women plays an important role particularly in the rural area as most board members (in our district) are farmers and not prepared beyond high school. 3 of our men graduated from this school."

"It seems men are less likely to rock the boat. They seem to want to agree with the superintendent or at least not be at odds with him. They seem content with the status quo.

"Women seem to care more about relationships between administrators/teachers, school/public, etc. Good communication is a high priority for women.

"Money seems to be the focus for the administration. Innovation, teacher ideas are not given the ear they should have. The budget is so tight it's hard to squeeze more programs out of it. Sad."

"Never lived away from the community. The men like to talk the 'buildings, buses, and money' without really looking at the educational issues."

"I do not see school board members from a sexist view - If they choose to be an effective board member - being male or female has no bearing."

"One area I feel that female school board members excel in most of the time is their organization and preparedness for meeting. I also feel they are sometimes more open-minded, better listeners, and more sympathetic to the needs of school children."

"Have found that more mothers visit school than fathers. This has helped the female board members to be more familiar with curriculum and classroom problems if present (such as needs for physical environment). I do believe that the strong areas for our women are curriculum and educational policies. The businessmen on our Board also present the strength for budget areas. Each Board will have individuals bringing their own strengths whether they be male or female."

"As a woman and mother I feel that I am sympathetic and understanding to the emotional needs of children. The men on our board are more involved with the athletics and finances. I feel that so much of our time is spent on the budget that we do not get to discuss the needs of our curriculum or quality of education. Our district displays no leadership among our top administrators which is disappointing to me. I think that they are in fear of losing their positions if they voice their opinions."

"It's hard to categorize men and women school board members since I am the only woman. I don't feel that when my view points differ from any of the other members, that it is because of my sex. Hopefully, we are all working toward the common goal of ever improving our educational system."

"I feel there is a great deal of difference between the men and women of our board . . . aside from the obvious. I feel they are (the men) far more concerned with the budget than the students. I am concerned with the basic curriculum - personnel - the food services, etc. The men are more concerned with the new computer lab - the new van - the new boilers and so on - they are all very capable - just various ideas. All work hard."

"I think it is important to have both sexes represented on a board of education. I can't say that one's sex stereotypes one's thinking because each individual is very different, but, the mix brings more balance in the decision making process."

"It is difficult being the only woman on this board - part of it due to being in a small town. I would say that in the last 2 years I have been able to assume the main leadership role - due to experience and knowledge of the school system. There have never been 2 women on this board at once - there is a reluctance on the part of women to run because this is a close-knit community where women serve on lots of committees, clubs, etc. together. Salary negotiations, evaluations, etc. put a strain on the women board members with teachers, teachers wives, etc."

"Because of the differences in men's and women's interests, I find that having both sexes represented on the board, the decisions reached are based on more diversified input during discussions."

"The men tend to dwell on certain issues meeting after meeting even though the item is not on the agenda. Ex: buses and insurance rates. It makes the president's job more difficult and lengthens meeting time."

"The male gender seem to be more concerned with the 'large amounts' of money being spent. But the little amounts need attention too - such as \$1-3,000 range. More attention is given by myself as to the feelings of what is best for the student and staff. Sometimes I feel that the males would like to intimidate me - since I am the only female on the board - but I do not allow this to happen most of the time. I think the females can make decisions faster - rather than sit and 'talk & talk' until you finally put the motion to be voted upon."

"I very much favor a mixture. Women seem to be approached more by parents and students & have a deeper interest in teachings and relationships. The men tend to be more questioning about bus bids, maintenance, etc. We have had a woman on our board for 15 years - but interestingly I am the first to hold office as Vice President or President."

"On our board there are several farmers. I am from a farming background also (parents & parents-in-laws are farmers) but many times our discussions center around which bus is burning the most oil and how much. Our overall lack of degrees in education or formal education is a drawback (myself included). But we are also in a very rural community so at times it doesn't matter anyway (they don't demand any better). I am the youngest school board member and the 3rd woman to be on the board in the history of the Clear Creek School District. The other board members have been courteous but somewhat distant at first. I am now an accepted member."

"I would like to see our education programs thoroughly evaluated and implement some long term goals and objectives to meet the education standards by 1990."

"In my district: the men go out for drinks with staff after meetings - the women don't."

"Some men members use board to force masculinity roles and are often patronizing or hostile to women. Some women base their votes on the benefits to their own children attending a particular school. Not true of male members. Non educator males have difficulty relating to women as equal board members. This is not demonstrated when the male

board member has experience (in work place) with women as equal workers and therefore decision makers.

"Assertive women in this district make males uncomfortable and frequent dominance behavior occurs."

"The local teachers' union issued a statement against my candidacy when I ran the first time but I was top vote getter - the second time I ran, they endorsed no one, in fact they discontinued their interviews of candidates."

"In our area, the men are more apt to rubber stamp any action the administration wants enacted. The women seem to ask more questions and initiate discussion before voting an issue. Most men in our area will say yes to anything involving athletics, whereas the women ask for a balance between music, art, and athletics."

"It has been my observation that most male board members focus more easily on plant maintenance and finances than on educational issues. I have often felt that my ideas are not given the consideration that the ideas of my fellow male board members are by the board members who are men. This has been especially frustrating because I have a background in education. I was the only female board member for three years and, believe me, chauvinism is not dead - at least not in small, rural communities."

"I think male and female board members differ in a few areas. Women are usually more aware of what effect decisions will have on the children. As mothers they are usually closer to the children and hear their views so can act on them. Men seem to be more finance minded. A well-balanced boards would have at least 2 female members."

"It seems I am one of two people on our board that is very concerned about our finances. The other board member has been on nine years. Every time something comes up that is to be purchased it seems we have to push and push to get it put out for bid. It's only natural they would want to save tax money, right? Well we don't always get the job done. I feel everything that can be, should be put out for bids. Just about everything we purchase could and should have specs so it can be bid."

"I've heard the comment from a board member that all we care about is money! Well I said, if the money isn't there, how do you pay the teachers? This is where it all starts as far as I'm concerned."

"I find my thinking is about the same as 1/2 of the male board members. So far, I have not encountered any problems. I enjoy these duties and feel I bring my own thoughts and attitudes to the board."

"I was the first woman to serve on our school board. I've been on 8 years now and it's only been the last 3 years that I felt my presence or what I could contribute had any bearing on the group. It's been a slow process to help my co-men board members to see the importance of a women's viewpoint. We do have different characteristics, all of which you list above, & we each need to contribute those to the 'whole' body & work together, not in competition, to do the work we need to do. It's been a very rewarding experience - frustrating at times - but all in all we have accomplished much in our years working together. Last year another woman was elected to the board and that has proved to be even more workable."

"Most men seem more interested in sports. Each member seems to have his/her own area of expertise i.e. machinery and building, insurance, curriculum & teaching practices, behavioral & learning needs, & legal rulings. It seems a rather well balanced board in most areas. That does not mean all members necessarily agree on all subjects."

"I often was heard to comment that 'the women's restrooms are never crowded at school board meetings.' Obviously this is changing. On the board on which I served there were 2 women - we were able to spend much time in the buildings observing and interacting with students, teachers, administrators and facilities. This gave us unique insights in the day-to-day working of our district. I know this was appreciated by the staff and other members of the board. I served under 2 superintendents and had the help of a superior board secretary (also the district's comptroller). The second superintendent was absolutely marvelous with regard to the equality of women and their opinions - this really helped me to grow. I felt very good about the last Board I served with - we worked together very well and certainly respected each other's gifts. My experience on the board directed me into some areas I might never have ventured (Legislative affairs) and I'm glad for the experience. I loved every minute I spent on the board!"

"We have 3 men and 2 women on our board. I can't see that we differ much in the areas you have listed. We work well together. Two of the men seem to grasp the budget more quickly than the rest of us and I have a better understanding of curriculum and internal school operations, but in both cases this is a matter of training, not gender."

"Boards need both men and women as members. Women bring up a point of view men don't think of at meetings."

"We have an ex-teacher and a principal from another district on our board. This was helpful because of their

knowledge of school workings. They had questions and answers the rest of us on the board didn't."

"As the only woman on the board I feel I should comment. This is my 3rd term or 9th year. It's been very educational for me and working relations with other board members has never been a problem and have been told and do feel I've been an asset to our school.

"I am being pressured to run again and know it is because the community likes a woman's view point. Many have come to me or called as it was easier for them to talk to a woman.

"A personal wish is that a dedicated woman will run this fall to fill my vacancy.

"Having lost our youngest son in a drowning accident two weeks after graduating in 1984 has taken the fight out of me and am unable, emotionally, to handle another term.

"I strongly support women serving on school boards."

"I wish more board members had the time, or would take the time, to study more issues, attend more meetings and workshops, and study parliamentary procedure, and the Iowa Code as they apply to Boards of Education. Some of our board members serve only special interest groups - and they should represent the general public. If people don't have time to devote to public office - they shouldn't run for it. A public stand on issue is necessary - a person on the Board shouldn't 'sit on the fence' then lean one way or the other in response their interest group - or who yells at them last!"

"Men seem to be interested mainly in sports, business, finance. Women in those fields too and everything else - students, personnel and staff relations, appearance, convenience, PR aids, arts and their relation to the community."

"This job is trying but most rewarding. With election by the community comes a big responsibility not only as a member but the moral responsibility to do what is best for the children of the community. This involves asking tough hard questions when necessary and following through to make needed changes on policy of staff."

APPENDIX H

GENERAL COMMENTS OF MALE BOARD MEMBERS

## General Comments

### Males

"Most present members and past members with whom I have been associated, serve because they have or have had children in the local school and feel a sense of obligation to serve. None that I have known are members to be self-serving or desire to champion any specific causes but are sincerely interested in the education of our young people."

"I have had the opportunity to serve only with one woman board member and she was above average as a board member. The only difference I noted was when a tough decision was made, it bothered her more than other board members."

"Women who serve on school boards tend to have a higher educational level than their male counterparts."

"This observation is not necessarily identifiable with male vs female but has shown up in that relationship as well as self-employed business and labor management. Attitudes of board members generally reflect their own experiences especially when dealing with contract negotiations, ie salaries, benefits, etc.

"Also one may spend as much or as little time in the role as a school board member as one's interest will provide."

"We have had women on the board previous to me and I don't think there is any difference between men and women board members. I think our goals are to provide the best education we can and to try and run as smooth an operation between all the parties involved as possible."

"Items of Importance (Golden Rules) (1) The Board of Education has only one employee/the superintendent. (All items must channel thru him.) (2) I was elected to serve based on my experience, judgment, and character. I will not be pressured by the varied opinions of others; this will only affect adversely my thought process. **Any resistance** by constituents can be voiced at the polls."

"In my opinion women seem to concern themselves with more trivial things than the real issue at hand, also it doesn't seem they carry near the impact with the public at large."

"The bottom line for any board member has got to be, what's best for the students, be they male or female board members!"



"I have worked with over 200 boards nationally on board orientation/evaluation - I really would like to get a tape of all your data after you use it in your graduate work."

"I have been on boards of both men and women board of education - all worked out very well - no comment."

"Some board members listen too closely to the administration. My role is listen to both sides, if possible, using the facts and information to make fair and reasonable decisions."

"We have had women board members, but not while I have served. I see no problem with women board members. I feel that it strengthens any board to have a variety of interests, attitudes, and personalities."

"It takes time to do like other community organizations. I usually feel pressure from some - where to get it all done!"

"I think what is above the shoulders counts more for being a good school board member than any other single thing."

"Our female members have a tendency to shy away from issues where people may be hurt or cut (even if the situation is a necessity). Other than that they are excellent members."

"The biggest difference is between people who work outside the home and those who do not. Those who do not get more involved in day-to-day affairs of the district. The best board members work full-time."

"I don't see or know of any sex difference in any decisions made at our meetings."

"I think you need men and women to work together to share their individual view point in order to have a good functioning well balanced board."

"I feel that both men and women board members are a must. New ways of thinking, interests, and input."

"I feel that the boards of education should have more input in the hiring of personnel! We hire only on the recommendations of the administration, which I personally believe is bad."

"The role of school board members vary widely due to (1) size or population within the district; (2) tenure and capability of the superintendent and staff."

"I feel there is no difference in men and women school board members, because each individual has something special to offer, in their particular field. Everyone has certain capabilities which stand out when they are put in a position of trust, as they would be when they are elected to a specific board."

"All women on the board would be fine and all men on the board would be fine. However, ideally, I believe that there should be some of each on every board."

"I believe that it is most important that each member make his/her contribution, have the interest and welfare of the students uppermost in every decision, and, after a decision is reached, all members must stand behind that decision."

"Concerns: Cheating on tests - often, overemphasis on competitive sports and winning - often, lack of emphasis on the great value of knowledge in itself, and the genuine joy derived from service to others."

"None except that all the board members I have served with have one thing in common - the best education possible with the financial resources that have been made available. Have served with 13 board members in 6 years - a very high turnover."

"School board members with children in school usually protect the interests of their children quite jealously and religiously. It is difficult for them to be objective on many issues."

"Women members seem to get to the heart of nitty-gritty classroom issues easier because mothers feel freer to share with a women member than with men members. I believe men and women board members provide a good balance (they are complimentary) on a school board. If possible, a board should have both men and women members."

"All well prepared board members are quite similar, although in my experience the female board members have been somewhat more likely to be well-prepared for committee and board meetings."

"I have not observed any differences."

"I don't believe there is any difference if men or women serve as board members. The one thing women have weakness is buildings and grounds. They are strong in education and fine arts."

"I would say women board members are more concerned, more sincere and more caring. On the other hand I think women tend to be more generous when it comes to finances, men are more conservative."

"I was surprised at the time involved with this job - I've served with two women on the board - one was very dedicated - the second just as dedicated but prone to emotional reactions."

"The local school board should have more rights to making decisions instead of letting public run the DPI to get a - that they think is right or wrong. We know the - caused the issue and how to - the issue."